CATHOLIC SERMONS.

A SERIES OF SERMONS, ON FAITH AND MORALS,

APPEARING EVERY WEEK.

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REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. III.

No.		PAGE
LXI.	THE LAST SACRAMENTS	721
LXII.	THE ASCENSION	733
LXIII.	PENTECOST	745
LXIV.	THE BLESSED TRINITY	757
LXV.	THE DIVINE NATURE	769
LXVI.	THE INCARNATION	781
LXVII.	CHRIST OUR LORD	793
LXVIII.	HEAR THE CHURCH	805
LXIX.	THE CATHOLIC'S SUNDAY	817
LXX.	THE HIDDEN LIFE OF JESUS	829
LXXI.	THE LORD IN HIS TEMPLE	841
LXXII.	THE BREAD OF LIFE	853
LXXIII.	FASTING	865
LXXIV.	JESUS SUFFERING	877
LXXV.	THE GLORIOUS LIFE	889
LXXVI.	GOD OUR JUDGE	901
LXXVII.	SIN	913
LXXVIII.	DAILY FAULTS	925
LXXIX.	THE WITNESS TO CHRIST	937
LXXX.	THE FOUNDATION	949
LXXXI.	THE MARKS OF THE CHURCH	961
LXXXII.	SANCTITY	973
LXXXIII.	CATHOLIC AND APOSTOLIC	985
LXXXIV.	THE CHURCH'S LAW	997
LXXXV.	ALL SAINTS	1009
LXXXVI.	THE HOLY SOULS	1021
LXXXVII.	MARY'S WORK IN REDEMPTION	1033
LXXXVIII.	PRAYERS FOR THE DEAD	1045
LXXXIX.	KEEPING SUNDAY HOLY	1057

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CLASSIFIED INDEX

Courses of Sermons

PAGE

ON THE SACRAMENTS (Conclusion).

61. The Last Sacraments — By Rev. J. B. Bagshawe. 721

ON THE APOSTLES' CREED.

64. The Blessed Trinity — By Rev. J. B. Bagshawe. 757
65. The Divine Nature ... — „ ... 769
66. The Incarnation ... — „ ... 781
67. Christ our Lord ... — „ ... 793
70. The Hidden Life of Jesus ... — „ ... 829
71. The Lord in His Temple ... — „ ... 841
74. Jesus Suffering ... — „ ... 877
75. The Glorious Life ... — „ ... 889
76. God our Judge ... — „ ... 901
77. Sin ... — „ ... 913
78. Daily Faults ... — „ ... 925
79. The Witness to Christ ... — „ ... 937
80. The Foundation ... — „ ... 949
81. The Marks of the Church ... — „ ... 961
82. Sanctity ... — „ ... 973
83. Catholic and Apostolic ... — „ ... 985
85. All Saints ... — „ ... 1009
86. The Holy Souls ... — „ ... 1021
88. Prayers for the Dead ... — „ ... 1045

ON THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH.

84. The Church's Law. — By Rev. J. B. Bagshawe. 997
89. Keeping Sunday Holy ... — „ ... 1057

OCCASIONAL SERMONS.

62. The Ascension — By Rev J. B. Bagshawe. 733
63. Pentecost ... — „ ... 745
68. Hear the Church. — By Very Rev. George Akers. 805
69. The Catholic's Sunday ... — „ ... 817
72. The Bread of Life ... — „ ... 853
73. Fasting ... — „ ... 865
87. Mary's Work in Redemption — By Rev. George Edwards 1033

Catholic Sermons

BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXI.

The Last Sacraments.

"It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own power" (Acts i. 7).

These are the words in which our Lord replied to His apostles, when they asked Him about the future. The great and terrible day of God, when this world and all its works are to be tried, are the moments which the Father has put in His own power; so, with regard to the fate of each one in particular, that judgment, which is all in all to each individual soul, is God's secret; when, and where, and how the judgment is to come upon us is known to Him only. I propose, to-day, to speak of the Sacraments by which we have to prepare for our last end, or, as they are commonly called, the "Last Sacraments."

These Sacraments are Penance, the Holy Viaticum, and Extreme Unction, and, after these, comes the Last Blessing and Plenary Indulgence, which the Church grants to the dying. Extreme Unction is the special Sacrament appointed by our Lord to help us in the time of sickness and danger of death. It was foreshadowed when Jesus sent out His apostles to preach and heal the sick. "And going forth, they preached that men should do penance. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (St. Mark vi. 13).

The Catechism tells us that "the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is the anointing of the sick with holy oil, accompanied with prayer." Of this Sacrament St. James speaks when he says: "Is any one sick among you? Let him bring in the priests of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith shall save the sick man,

and the Lord shall raise him up, and, if he be in sins, they shall be forgiven him" (St. James v. 14).

A special holy oil is blessed for this purpose on Maundy Thursday every year. Just before the *Pater Noster* the Bishop leaves the altar to consecrate the olive oil, which is prepared for the "oil of the sick," that "it may be used as a spiritual unction to strengthen the temple of the Living God." He blesses the oil with this prayer: "Send forth, we beseech Thee, O Lord, Thy Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, from heaven upon this fatness of the olive which Thou hast deigned to produce from the green tree, for the refreshment of mind and body, that, by Thy holy blessing, it may be, to every one anointed with this oil of heavenly medicine, a protection of body and soul, to drive away all pains, all infirmities, and all sickness of mind and body."

The holy anointing is intended for those who are in danger of death by sickness, and cannot be given in any other case, and the effect of this Sacrament is that "it comforts and strengthens the soul in danger of death by sickness; it also remits sin, and even restores health when God sees it to be expedient."

Besides Extreme Unction, a Christian on his death-bed is bound to receive the Holy Eucharist as *Viaticum*, and will naturally prepare himself by the Sacrament of Penance. It is a matter of strict obligation to receive the Holy Eucharist when in danger of death, since it is the one special preparation appointed by our Lord. Sometimes the illness may be of such a kind that it is impossible for the sick man to receive Communion without danger of irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament, and then he is excused; but, in ordinary cases, every one is bound, on pain of mortal sin, to receive the Holy Viaticum.

These two Sacraments—Penance and the Holy Eucharist—have been our companions through life, but they receive a special character of solemnity when we receive them in our last sickness. Oh, who can tell how awful a thing it will be to make the last earthly confession of one's sins, and to receive the Body and Blood of our Lord for the last time in this life! It is the will of God that

our earthly trial should, as it were, be concentrated in those last few hours. The rest of our lives are specially important to us—according to the ordinary dispositions of God's Providence—as the means to a good death; but the one great thing which Almighty God requires of us, is to be found ready and in a state of grace when the hour of death comes. All that we may have done during life will be of no avail, unless, by God's help, we die in a state of grace.

"Let your loins be girt, and lamps burning in your hands, and you yourselves like men who wait for their Lord when He shall return from the wedding: that when He cometh and knocketh, they may open to Him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching" (St. Luke xii. 25). The one thing specially asked of you, my brethren, is to be "found watching." It was the condition made with you when you were baptized. The priest put a light into your hand with the words: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism so as to be without blame; keep the commandments of God, that, when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet Him in the company of all the saints in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever." Eternal life was to depend upon being ready when the Lord should come. Our Blessed Saviour puts this before us most strongly in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, to which these words allude: the foolish virgins had allowed their lamps to be extinguished, and, "whilst they went to buy, the bridegroom came: and they that were ready went with Him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. But He, answering, said, Amen I say to you, I know you not. Watch ye, therefore, because you know not the day nor the hour" (St. Matt. xxv. 10).

We find the same thing in the parable of the marriage feast. There, too, there is but *one* question, "How came you in here not having on the wedding garment?" In that one question everything else was contained. So it is with our eternal salvation; the one thing necessary is

to be found the friend of God, and clothed in the garment of divine grace, when our souls go forth from this world.

And how can we secure this? What shall we be able to do for ourselves in that hour? Our Lord wept over Jerusalem and said, "If thou also had known, and that in this thy day, the things that are to thy peace, but now they are hidden from thy eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and straiten thee on every side, and beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are in thee, and they shall not leave in thee a stone upon a stone, because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation" (St. Luke xix. 42).

Do not these words terribly describe what will be the condition of a Christian soul, if left to his own resources at the hour of death? The enemy has encompassed him around, and there is no escape; all his strength is overcome, and his powers have failed; his mind is wandering and thoughts astray; his senses disturbed, and his will appears to have no longer the mastery. Without there is desolation, and within rebellion, and all the powers of body and soul are prostrated at the moment they are most needed. "They shall beat thee flat to the ground, and thy children who are within thee."

It is, therefore, our duty to prepare, as far as we can, "in this our day," against that hour, and to provide beforehand the things that are to our peace. The Lord has provided special means of grace against that time; sacraments which do not depend for their effect on what we are able to do for ourselves, but give grace by the direct ordinance of Christ.

"Watch ye, therefore, because ye know not the day nor the hour" (St. Matt. xxv. 13). The most appalling part of that terrible day is the darkness that surrounds it. We know not the day nor the hour; all that we do know is, to use the words of David, that there "is but one step between me and death." It is not necessary to talk of sudden deaths—of those sudden and unusual calls which we so often see around us—because, as it ordi-

narily comes, death is very sudden, and gives us very little warning. Take the usual death of men, and you will find that the enemy is upon us very suddenly, and gives little time for preparation. We all suppose that the last illness will be something very solemn, and very unlike anything else, which will at once give us notice of what is to come; but how will it really be? See how death comes upon other people. A man takes a chill, or a little fever and shivering, something like what he has had twenty times before: he is obliged to stay away from his work and lie up; he is languid, and indisposed to thought and exertion. Oh, it is nothing, and will pass off in a few days. And so the time goes on, in drowsiness and discomfort, or in sharp suffering, perhaps in fretfulness and neglect of God: he keeps on day after day, expecting to be better shortly, and about again—perhaps he carefully shuts his eyes to the anxiety which those around him are beginning to display—to the frequent visits and anxious looks of his friends—till at last it comes home to him that he must die. The sentence has gone forth, and the hours are few, and at last he sees and knows it: he reads the sentence in the eyes of those around, and feels it in himself—he must die.

Is this all the preparation we are to have?—a few days of pain, and weariness, and distraction of mind, and a few hours only, it may be, in which we realize that we have to prepare ourselves for the judgment that is to come! This is the way in which most people die, and it will probably be so with us whenever death does come—it will always seem to be sudden, and we shall feel with King Ezechias, "My generation is at an end, and is rolled away from me as a shepherd's tent. My life is cut off as by a weaver: whilst I was yet beginning, he cut me off" (Is. xxxviii. 12).

But what, my dear brethren, is the object of dwelling upon death, and thinking how, and when, it will steal upon us? It is not to terrify us, but to remind us that the great thing we have to do as Christians is to prepare to die well. The apostle tells us that we are "not to mourn like those who have no hope;" and so we must

not allow ourselves to fear as those who have nothing to hope for. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;" but this judgment is to be to us, as we hope in God's mercy, the beginning of everlasting life. "Amen, Amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit" (St. John xii. 24).

"Expect the Lord and do manfully, and let thy heart take courage and wait for the Lord" (Ps. xxvi. 14). "Being confident of this very thing, that He begun a good work in you, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). And how are we to prepare? It is plain that, in one sense, there is no preparation for a good death, except a good life. If, for instance, anyone were to think that he had found out some good plan for obtaining a happy death, whereas he did not mean to lead a virtuous life, it is certain that he would be deceiving himself. "Be not deceived: God is not mocked. For what things a man shall sow, those also shall he reap. For he that soweth in his flesh, of the flesh also shall reap corruption; but he that soweth in the spirit, of the spirit shall reap life everlasting" (Gal. vi. 7).

We need, however, special preparation. If you were going before an earthly tribunal—to be examined before an earthly magistrate—you would not fail to rehearse and prepare yourself, to set your accounts in order, and to see that there was nothing which could be brought forward against you to your shame. So, too, should men prepare themselves for the judgment of our Lord Jesus Christ, come when it may. "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, thy adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison" (St. Matt. v. 25).

The chief thing which we can do to obtain the blessing of a happy end is to pray for it. God alone can give it to us, and we may have confidence that He will grant it to earnest prayer. "I have put my trust in Thee, O Lord: I said, Thou art my God; my lot is in Thy

hands" (Ps. xxx. 15). Nothing that we can do will ever deserve the grace of final perseverance, and a good death; it must be by the free gift of God that we persevere to the end and save our souls, and His providence alone can make "all things work together unto good, to such as, according to His purpose, are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28).

Many forms of prayer for a happy death are approved by the Church, and there is one which is constantly in our mouths: "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and at the hour of our death." It is impossible to say this devoutly without thinking of that last hour, and begging for a happy death by the very fact that we ask our Lady's intercession at that awful moment. It would be well for us all, my dear brethren, if we made this prayer with out hearts, as well as with our lips, every time we said the "Hail, Mary."

The particular thing for which we should pray at that hour, is that we may have the opportunity of receiving the last Sacraments, and the grace to receive them devoutly. When we think of the frailty and imperfection of human nature, and the constant temptations to which we are exposed, we cannot but feel how much we shall need some special cleansing and sanctification before entering into the presence of our Judge; and what can be better than those Sacraments which our Lord has established in His Church for this very purpose?

It may, indeed, be in the designs of God's providence that we should be called away without any such preparation, and without any of that sacramental grace which He has provided for the dying. In that case, we need not fear, since He can supply all our spiritual necessities in His own way, if only we have lived up to the graces we have received; but, at least, let us not be deprived of the Sacraments because we undervalued them, or did not pray for them, or neglected to make use of them when it was in our power.

We will now consider what are the dispositions with which we ought to receive the last Sacraments, and what effects they ought to produce in our souls. Our first

resolve and determination ought to be to receive these Sacraments in good time. They are meant to help us in danger of death, *not* when all hope of recovery is past. The very idea of Extreme Unction, in particular, is that it should be a spiritual remedy for disease of body as well as of soul: "The Lord shall raise him up." The prayers during the administration of the Sacrament are full of petitions for the restoration of bodily health, as well as spiritual blessings, and breathe nothing but cheerful hope for the sick man. "Cure, we beseech Thee, O Lord, our Redeemer, the infirmities of this sick man, heal his wounds, and forgive his sins; drive away from him all sorrows of mind and body, and mercifully give complete soundness, both within and without, that, being restored by the aid of Thy mercy, he may again be made fit for his former duties." "At the invocation of Thy holy Name, be Thou mercifully at hand to free Thy servant from his sickness, and to bestow health upon him; to raise him up with Thy right hand, strengthen him with Thy power, and shield him with Thy might, and restore him to Thy holy Church with all the prosperity he can desire."

It constantly happens, in fact, that the sick, after receiving Extreme Unction, recover their health in a way which seems like an answer to prayer, as if Almighty God had been pleased to make this the turning-point of their illness. If you delay receiving the Sacraments till you are almost at the point of death, you may, perhaps, lose the temporal help which God designed for you, and you certainly run the risk of losing the greater part of the spiritual blessings which the Sacrament was meant to give.

You want the grace of God whilst your mind is still active and exposed to temptation, whilst the last labour of your salvation is still going on, and the "good fight" has still to be fought, and not when all is nearly over, and the lethargy of death is upon you.

The same considerations apply even more forcibly to Confession and Communion: you want to receive them whilst you have your reason about you, and are able to prepare for them with all that devotion with which they

should be received for the last time. It is an unworthy kind of cowardice which makes Christians delay; they are afraid to acknowledge, even to themselves, that they are in danger of death, and so run the risk of dying unprepared, because they dare not look their last end in the face.

If this is a culpable weakness on the part of those who are ill, it is a still more serious neglect on the part of those who have the care of their brethren in sickness. It is not an uncommon thing to find husbands and wives and children who will run the risk of allowing their relatives and friends to die without the Sacraments, because they are too weak and selfish to say a word of the danger; and they think themselves loving and dutiful friends, even whilst doing the worst injury that one human being can inflict on another!

On these occasions people flatter themselves that they are actuated by kindness to their friends and a desire to keep them from a painful shock, whereas, in reality, it is mere selfishness. They do not like to look forward to painful things, or speak of them. In all probability the sick man has a very good idea of the real state of the case and will not be made any worse by being told of his danger in plain terms.

The first thing is to make your confession. What a confession it would be if you could realize that perhaps your next would be made standing face to face with your Eternal Judge! "Behold, the Judge standeth before the door" (St. James v. 9). The time for a merciful judgment and a gentle sentence is fast slipping away. Oh, for the grace to make the best use of it!

In that confession, perhaps, many disguises will have to be thrown aside, and we shall see things in truer lights, and call them by plainer names than we do now. We shall then earnestly desire to make up for the deficiencies of all past confessions; for their want of real sincerity and humility in acknowledging our sins, and perhaps want of sufficient purpose of amendment. How awful will the moment be when the iniquity of his life, which seems now to be concentrated into one brief period, shall

come before the Christian soul; when there is no time to amend, and but a few moments to repent! Then, indeed, we shall see how completely we have to rely on God's infinite mercy and on the Precious Blood of Jesus which is offered to us in the Sacraments—then we shall see how little it is that we can do, and how much we must leave to Him.

But we can do a great deal now in preparation for that day, if we will. If we made every confession as we should like to make that last one, it would be, comparatively, an easy and a joyful matter. If we took care each time to leave nothing behind which could be a pain and grief to us at that moment, and were resolved always to be straightforward with ourselves and our confessor, and to leave no corner unexplored and no sin unrepented, we should have little to trouble us. The habits of careless self-examination, imperfect explanation, and, above all, of insincere purpose of amendment—these are the things which will make our last confession difficult and painful. Let it be our constant prayer, my dear brethren, that God will enable us to receive that last absolution, so as to wash away every stain from our baptismal robe—the stains of youth and passion, the stains of middle life and old age, so that we may carry it "unspotted before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ."

And now comes the Viaticum, the most touching of all Sacraments. Many a time you have knelt at the altar of God to receive the Body and Blood of Jesus, but now He comes to visit you, and says, in a double sense, "This day must I abide in thy house." The Lord Himself has come to comfort you in your sickness. In the sick man's room an altar is erected, and his friends should take pains that everything is arranged with becoming propriety. There should be a crucifix and candles and holy water, and water for the purification after Communion, (it is best to provide a bottle of fresh water and a small tumbler) and, if possible, something should be prepared in the way of flowers and ornament. It is a favourite devotion of many pious people to go before and prepare the houses of the poor when the Viaticum is to be ad-

ministered. It is only decent that some preparation should be made for our Lord, and such externals generally have their effect on the feelings and devotion of all around.

"Peace be to this house and to all who dwell therein." This is the salutation with which the priest greets you, on our Lord's part, as he enters the room. Jesus brought peace on earth when He came at Bethlehem, and once more peace when He rose from the dead, and now He comes at the moment when we most need it, to bring us the last earthly peace—that peace which the world cannot give. Let us endeavour to be the "sons of peace."

Then comes the *Confiteor* as usual, with the words, "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who takes away the sins of the world." Now, perhaps for the last time, Jesus presents Himself to the sick man under the Sacramental veil. He has been to him the manna in the desert, and has accompanied him to the very borders of the promised land, and now comes to be his Viaticum, to see him safe on his way. The *next* time He comes the veil will be drawn aside, and the Creator and the creature will meet face to face. "Receive, brother, the Viaticum of the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep thee safe from the deadly foe, and lead thee into life everlasting." These are the words with which the sick man receives his last Communion.

It must not be imagined, however, that the Blessed Sacrament can only be received once, and therefore is to be received only when death is approaching. It may be received as often as necessary, according to the duration of the illness. As soon as there is *danger* the rule about fasting ceases to bind, and we should be anxious to receive our Lord as soon as may be, so that we may have the full benefit of His Sacred Presence in time of peril.

The essence of the Sacrament of Extreme Unction is the anointing of the organs of sense with the holy oil, accompanied by prayer. The priest makes the sign of the cross on the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, the closed lips, on the palms of the hands, and the upper part of the feet, and with each anointing he says the appropriate prayer for the sense. "By this holy anointing and His

own most tender mercy, may the Lord forgive thee whatever thou hast sinned by thy sight," or "by thy hearing."

The senses are the windows, as it were, of the soul, by which all communication with the outer world is held, and, as such, almost every sin we can commit is connected with their use. The special grace of Extreme Unction is to wash away the remains of sin—the stain which every sin seems to leave behind it, which is so seldom completely effaced in this life. It has, moreover, the special office of giving strength and comfort to the soul in the hour when they are most needed. The oil, which is its external sign, is the symbol of strength, as well as of comfort and gladness, and may well represent the Sacramental grace, which our Lord has prepared for the sick.

The Sacrament of Extreme Unction can only be given once in each sickness, and it may be given even to those who have lost the use of their senses, and, consequently, are unable to make a confession, or receive the Holy Eucharist.

When, at last, the hour of death is at hand, there is one more gift which the Church has in store for her children. It is the "last blessing," or the plenary indulgence, granted to the dying. "By the Passion and death of Thy only-begotten Son, mercifully grant him pardon and the remission of all his offences, that his soul, at the hour of its going forth, may find Thee a propitiated Judge, and, being washed from all stain in the Blood of Thy Son, may deserve to pass to life eternal."

Let us conclude with the Church's parting words to her dying children: "Go forth, O Christian soul, out of this world, in the name of God the Father Almighty, who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, who suffered for Thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost, who sanctified thee. . . . May thy place be this day in peace, and thy abode in holy Sion. Through Christ our Lord!"

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXII.

The Ascension.

"In my Father's house there are many mansions" (St. John xiv. 2).

On this day, my dear brethren, a wonderful picture is placed before us. We see the Church on earth, the apostles and disciples of our Lord gathered together, and in the midst of them the Blessed Mother of God; they are all gazing up into heaven with intent faces and longing eyes, looking after their beloved Master as He is taken from them. They see Him going up to heaven, and follow Him on that bright path by which He has gone from them, even after He is concealed from their sight. "And when He had said these things while they looked on, He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. And while they were beholding Him going up to heaven, behold two men stood by them in white garments, who also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This same Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 9).

That last vision of Jesus must have remained always deeply impressed upon the hearts of the apostles. Wherever they went, in whatever company they were, whatever the world might offer to them, they would still have before them the thought of Jesus going up to heaven. When they stood before kings and magistrates, when they were hated and reviled, and cast out for the name of Jesus, what greater encouragement could they have than the remembrance of their Lord's glorious Ascension, and of that bright path by which He entered into His glory? The world might do its best to corrupt them by its treasures, but no earthly riches could for one moment compare with the glory which their Master had displayed

to them. In pain, in exile, in discouragements of all sorts, they needed no better comfort than the remembrance of the promise, that one day He should come again "as they had seen Him going into heaven."

The Ascension was the fitting completion of our Lord's victory. At His Resurrection He was triumphant over all His enemies, and that, at the very moment when to men He appeared utterly defeated; earthly enemies and the spirits of darkness had been overcome, and "the Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thy enemies thy footstool" (Ps. cix. 1). He was no longer to remain on earth, but was to enter into His glory, and to enjoy the fruits of the victory He had won, and on this day we see Him completing His work, and entering in triumph into His kingdom.

The forty days we have just passed through are a specially wonderful time. They were the days which the apostles spent with their glorified Master upon earth to hear His last words, and to complete the lessons He had so long been giving. These days were like the harvest time—ripening and bringing to maturity, in a few hours, the labours of the whole year. They could now see the force and meaning of those things which had before been incomprehensible to them. Before His Passion our Lord said: "I have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now" (St. John xvi. 12); but in these days they had learned the mystery of the cross, and the time had come for them to receive the last commission which Jesus was to entrust to them.

Two great things our Lord had to do during these forty days: He was to convince His apostles and disciples of the truth of His resurrection, that they might be witnesses of it to the whole world and to the end of time. He appeared to them, therefore, at many times, and in many places—sometimes to a few in private, sometimes to a multitude of the disciples gathered together. "He rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures, and He was seen by Cephas, and after that by the eleven; then was He seen by more than five hundred brethren at once, of whom many remain until this present, and some

are fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles" (1 Cor. xv. 4).

He appeared to His disciples, and showed them His wounds, and eat with them, to convince them that it was He Himself who was risen, and yet all this He did so, as to teach them that He was not coming back to their mortal life, but was to raise them to a higher and immortal life, of which He was giving them the example. They knew Him, and yet they knew Him not; they heard Him and touched Him and eat with Him, and yet He was not with them as before, but was living a mysterious and glorified life in the midst of them. "But when morning was come, Jesus stood on the shore: yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus, therefore, said to them, Children, have you any meat? They answered Him, No. He saith to them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find. They cast, therefore; and now they were not able to draw it, for the multitude of fishes. . . . Jesus saith to them, Come and dine. And none of them who were at meat durst ask Him, Who art Thou? knowing that it was the Lord. And Jesus cometh and taketh bread and fish in like manner" (St. John xxi. 4).

The object, therefore, of this holy time was not merely to convince His apostles that He had really risen again, but to raise them up from a mere mortal and natural life to that higher life which it was the object of His coming to establish upon earth. "Therefore, if you be risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting at the right hand of God: mind the things that are above, not the things that are upon the earth" (Coloss. iii. 1).

But there was another great work to be done in these forty days, which could not be carried out till the mystery of the cross had been unfolded. Our Lord remained on earth with His apostles to complete the establishment and organization of His Church. The apostles were to go forth into the whole world as witnesses of His revelation; they were to teach all nations "to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them." For this

purpose our Lord had to form them into an organized society, fitted to endure till the end of time. He had to bestow on them the fulness of the doctrine they were to teach others. "To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to the rest in parables;" and, moreover, He was to give them the power to speak and act in His name, and to hand on to others the great gifts He had given to them. To do all this was the work of the forty days.

When Jesus had gone up into heaven, the apostles needed the grace of the Holy Spirit, but they required no further instruction; they understood exactly what was the work before them, and how to set about it. Even before the Holy Spirit had come upon them, they proceeded, of their own authority, to fill up the vacant place in the apostolic college, and to choose St. Mathias as one who "must be made a witness with us of the resurrection" (Acts i. 22).

The apostles were prepared for every emergency as it arose, and acted in all things, not as mere individuals following their own ideas, but as members of a thoroughly organized and lawfully-established society.

What our Lord had done in part, or for a time, during His mortal life, He now completed and put, if we may say so, into working order. He had before made St. Peter the foundation and central authority of His Church, when He said to them: "I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18). The meaning of this promise, and its effect in His Church, had now to be brought out clearly; and "when, therefore, they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to Him, Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to him, Feed my lambs. . . Feed my lambs. . . Feed my sheep" (St. John xxi. 15). Here our Lord, after His resurrection—after St. Peter's denial—confirms His former promise, and gives it a more definite meaning by making him the shepherd of the whole flock.

With the organization of the Church, and the establishment of its hierarchy, went two other gifts, for the sake of which the Church had been formed into an organized society. These were the commission and authority to teach, and the power to bestow sacramental graces. Here again we find our Lord, after His resurrection, completing the gift which He had before made to His apostles: "Amen, I say to you, whatsoever you shall bind upon earth, shall be bound also in heaven; and whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 18). See how this is completed and carried out by our Lord after His resurrection: "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When He had said this, He breathed on them: and He said to them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (St. John xx. 22).

This mysterious forty days, then, my dear brethren, we must look upon as the time in which our Lord established His Church in detail, and gave His apostles precise instruction in all that they were to do and teach, and appointed the matter and form of those Sacraments by which grace was hereafter to be bestowed on the human race. We may, then, indeed call it the harvest time when all the words that He had before spoken were to bear fruit in the establishment of His Church. "But there are, also, many other things which Jesus did;" "Many other signs also did Jesus, in the sight of His disciples, which are not written in this book, but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that, believing, you may have life in His name" (St. John xxi. 25—xx. 30).

And now the moment has come for His departure, and Jesus leads forth His disciples to Mount Olivet, to hear His last words. He exhorts and He rebukes them; He promises that the Holy Spirit shall come upon them, "and, lifting up His hands, He blessed them, and it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up into heaven" (St. Luke xxiv. 51).

We can fancy to ourselves how full the hearts of the

apostles were as they saw Him thus taken up in their sight. They were full of triumph and joy at His exaltation, as they saw Him ascending by His own power, whilst, at the same time, they could not but be sad at the thought of parting from Him. They were full of His last words—of the great work which He had given them to do, and the promises which He had made to them, so they stood gazing after Him till a bright cloud received Him from their sight, and the door was, as it were, shut against them.

As He was taken up into heaven He left them His blessing. As, after the Creation, Almighty God blessed the works of His hands, and it was in the strength of that blessing that all things went on, so our Lord blessed the work which He had established upon earth, and by that blessing gave it the power to live and persevere in spite of all obstacles. This last blessing, which Jesus gave to His Church, was its only strength; He sent it forth amongst men without worldly means, without power or wealth or learning, strong only in this, that His blessing went with them, and remains with them to the end of time.

"Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord who is strong and mighty: the Lord mighty in battle. Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of hosts, He is the King of Glory" (Ps. xxiii. 7). This is a joyful day for earth, since the Son of Man ascended as a victor into heaven; but it is a still more glorious day for heaven when the King of Glory enters in. Who can follow the course of our Lord as He passed out of the sight of men to take possession of His kingdom, and to be crowned with the glory of the Only-Begotten of the Father! If men come forth with exultation to greet an earthly victor, when he returns in triumph, and sing songs of joy, and make acclamations before him, how much more would the princes of heaven come forth to meet their eternal Lord! How glorious does that heavenly Jerusalem appear on this day, with its foundations of precious stones, and its gates of pearl,

and the glory of God to enlighten it! Would that our imaginations could bring before us for one moment this scene, too bright and beautiful for mortal eyes! Would that we could listen to the songs of triumph, and tender loving homage with which the angels greeted our Lord on this His victory: "The Lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power, and divinity, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and benediction." "To Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb, benediction and honour, and glory and power for ever and ever" (Apoc. v. 12).

But our Lord did not ascend into heaven for Himself: as He had suffered for us, and risen from the dead for our sakes, so now He ascended into heaven that He might raise up our human nature, which He had taken to Himself. To use the words of St. Leo the Great: "In all verity it was a great and unspeakable cause for joy to see the Manhood, in the presence of that holy multitude of believers, exalted above all creatures, even heavenly, rising above the ranks of the angelic armies, and speeding its glorious way to where the most noble of the archangels lie far behind, to rest no lower than that place where, high above all principality and power, it taketh its seat at the right hand of the Eternal Father, sharer of His throne, and partaker of His glory, and still the very man's nature which the Son hath taken upon Him.

"Therefore, dearly beloved brethren, let us also rejoice with worthy joy, for the Ascension of Christ is exaltation for us, and whither the glory of the Head of the Church is passed in, thither is the hope of the body of the Church called on to follow. Let us rejoice with exceeding great joy, and give God glad thanks. This day is not only the possession of paradise made sure unto us, but, in the person of our Head, we are actually begun to enter into the heavenly mansions above. Through the unspeakable goodness of Christ, we have gained more than ever we lost by the envy of the devil. We, whom our venomous enemy thrust from our first happy home—we, being made of one body with the Son of God, have, by Him, been given a place at the right hand of the Father: with

whom He liveth and reigneth, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, one God, world without end. Amen" *(Breviary Lesson").*

Our Lord ascended into heaven to take possession of a kingdom for us, and to break down that barrier which had separated heaven from earth. Man was to enter heaven and take his place amongst the angels, and from henceforth, that heavenly gate was to be open to receive the sons of men. From that time forth, a constant stream of the weary pilgrims of earth has poured into that blessed city: the gate is henceforth to be ever open, so that there shall be a constant communion between heaven and earth; by the communion of saints a perpetual bond of sympathy and mutual love is established, in virtue of which the Church on earth glorifies God in His saints, and the blessed in heaven, by their prayers, help their brethren upon earth.

"Ascending on high, He led captivity captive; He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8). Our Lord had broken through the bonds by which men were enslaved, and on this day He enters heaven surrounded by the vast crowd of holy souls who had so long waited for His coming. Who can describe the glorious company of the saints and heroes of the Old Law, the patriarchs and prophets who, after their long captivity, were now to enter with their Redeemer into eternal rest, and to see God face to face for all eternity? It had been their privilege in this life to foretell His coming, and to prophecy of Him to their people, and for ages they had waited and longed for the day when He should set them free from bondage. When His Blessed soul went down into Limbo, He filled their prison with light and joy, and gave them a foretaste of the triumph of this day; and now, with songs of joy, they leave their prison, and accompany Him in His triumphal entry.

"Lift up your gates, ye princes, and be ye lifted, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." Go forth, ye princes of heaven, to welcome this King of Glory, and that vast crowd of new brethren whom He brings in His train, who are now to join their voices with

yours in praising the Lamb who was slain from the beginning of the world, by whose blood all have been redeemed.

But it is not merely great saints and heroes who accompany our Lord on the day of His triumph. "In my Father's house there are many mansions." There is a place for the poor and the weak—for those who had but little light and who sinned by ignorance, and who, perhaps, lived very imperfect lives upon earth. The Merciful Judge, who "knows what is in man," and can read the heart of every man, has judged each one according to the light that he possessed, and made full allowance for all the weakness of human nature. He has judged them all in mercy, and, after their long banishment, "now they desire a better, that is to say, a heavenly country. Therefore, God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He hath prepared for them a city" (Heb. xi. 16), and found for them a place in their Father's house.

"In my Father's house there are many mansions; if not, I would have told you that I go to prepare a place for you. And if I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and take you to myself, that where I am you also may be" (St. John xiv. 2). This, my dear brethren, is the grand hope that the triumph of this day puts before us. Our Lord, entering into His kingdom, has prepared a place not only for great and heroic souls, but for every one whom He has redeemed by His Precious Blood. Each one of us may feel assured that amongst those many mansions there is a place prepared for him more glorious than the heart of man can conceive, and it will be by his own fault if he does not one day take possession of it.

All that the world can offer of riches and glory and power cannot for one moment be compared with even the least place in that glorious kingdom. "When God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be no more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. xxi. 4). Oh, how hast Thou multiplied Thy mercy, O God! But the children of men shall put their trust

under the covert of Thy wings. They shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasure, for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 8).

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven." These were the words with which the angels recalled the apostles to the work they had to do on earth. They were not to stand gazing up into heaven, accompanying their Master in their thoughts, and delighting their hearts with His glory; but they must at once set about the work He had given them to do. It was the time for toil, not for rest; they were no longer to be like children, but they must do the work of men to earn their reward. "The days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days" (St. Luke v. 35). Those days had now come, and they had to return to Jerusalem to enter upon the labours and sufferings of the apostolic ministry. "And they adoring went back to Jerusalem with great joy" (St. Luke xxiv. 52). They went back full of zeal and alacrity, rejoicing to labour and suffer for their Master, and impatient to do His work. They sorrowed indeed for His absence, but His words were still sounding in their ears: "I tell you the truth, it is expedient for you that I go" (St. John xvi. 7). It was the time for them to exercise the virtues of faith and obedience, and to do His work, and to bear the trials and persecutions of the world; and it was better for them to do this than to enjoy the happiness of His visible presence. Their Master was to come back again; He had "gone into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return," and in the meantime He had left them to make the most of the goods entrusted to their care. "This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven."

These must have been the thoughts which filled the minds of the apostles as they returned to Jerusalem to

await the coming down of the Holy Spirit, and prepare themselves in retirement and prayer for the great work that was before. Let us, my dear brethren, suit these thoughts to ourselves. We have not seen Jesus as the apostles had, but His words are constantly in our ears, and we can fancy to ourselves, in some degree, the dignity and sweetness of His Ascension. We can imagine the happy home which He has prepared for us in heaven, and the glorious presence of Jesus at the right hand of God: "Whom, having not seen, you love; in whom, also now, though you see Him not, you believe; and, believing, shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified" (1 St. Peter i. 8).

What we have to do is to keep the Kingdom of God constantly before us, and to think of the place which our Lord has prepared for us with Himself. "Whither I go you know, and the way you know" (St. John xiv. 4). The remembrance of this will be to us, as it was to the apostles, a sure remedy against temptations of all kinds; neither threats nor allurements will have much effect upon those whose hearts are fixed on the glory which God has prepared for His saints. We must next think of the responsibility of the work entrusted to our care. It is not a great work like that which the apostles had to undertake; it seems unimportant and trivial, perhaps, but still it is the work of God just as much as their's was, and if we do it well, it will bring with it a great reward. Our Master is coming back, and for us, at least, it may be very soon; we have no time to lose, and must at once set about the task enjoined, whatever it may be. The apostles prepared themselves for their great work by two things—by prayer and by relying on the grace of the Holy Spirit. We, too, must do the work of our Heavenly Master in the same way; we must look for the light of the Holy Spirit to show us what we ought to do, and by prayer we must obtain the strength to do it.

Our Master will return to take an account of His servants, and to see what work they have done in His absence. "Behold I come quickly, and my reward is

with me to render to every man according to His works" (Apoc. xxii. 12). The Lord knows what each one of His servants can do, and He knows how tedious and wearisome it is to human nature to go on labouring day after day. Did He not Himself come on earth to toil? In proportion to the zeal we show, and the pain which it costs us to do His will, His reward will be. Let us, then, set our hands to the work before us with that zeal which the apostles displayed, and we may be sure that the Holy Spirit, who helped them to labour, will not be wanting to us.

Finally, my dear brethren, we must try to join, with all our hearts, in the universal song of congratulation, which heaven and earth raise to our Lord, and rejoice in His glorious Ascension—not for ourselves, for the good gifts which He has this day given to us, but because He who deigned to suffer and be humbled, even unto death, for us is now triumphant over all His enemies, and reigns a glorious King for ever and ever!

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXIII.

Pentecost.

"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth" (Wisdom i. 7).

The day of Pentecost, my dear brethren, may be called the birthday of the Catholic Church. Our Lord had taught His apostles, and sent them forth with full power. He had formed His Church into a corporate body, with a complete organization, which would enable it to maintain its unity when spread throughout the whole world, and only one thing was wanting—the spirit of life. It was as yet but a dead body, and was waiting for that life from on high, by which our Lord willed that His Church should live.

There are many things which men can do. They can create very perfect machinery, accurate in all its parts, but they cannot give life, and bid the machine to live. So it is in spiritual things: they can create societies, and can organize and endow them, but they cannot give spiritual life, and make their organization into a living body.

Our Lord would not allow His apostles to begin their work at once. The fields were white for the harvest; the world was waiting for the message of redemption; but still the apostles must rest for a while before they entered upon their mission. "And eating together with them, He commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but should wait for the promise of the Father, which you have heard (saith He) by my mouth, for John indeed baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem and all Judea, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts. i. 4—8).

It was not to be *their* work. The apostles themselves and the world must understand that what they said, and did, and taught, was not the work of man, but of God. Men were to be the instruments by which the Church was to be taught and governed, and great powers were entrusted to them, which they might use well or ill; but, after all, they were but instruments, and the society was to be guided and overruled by the power of God. "It is not you that speak, but the spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (St. Matt. x. 20). The apostles, and thousands of their successors, were endowed with great holiness, and the highest gifts that men could possess, but they were not to trust to these for the conversion of mankind, but were to rely on something higher.

"And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not in the loftiness of speech or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of Christ. . . . And my speech was not in the persuasive words of human wisdom, but in the showing of the spirit and power, that your faith might not stand on the wisdom of men, but on the power of God" (1 Cor. ii. 1). Thus does St. Paul speak of his own ministry and of his successes amongst the nations—not as the fruit of his own zeal or eloquence, but as the effect of the Spirit of God which accompanied him.

Let us now look into this "upper chamber" where the disciples are gathered together awaiting the Holy Spirit. They have spent ten days in preparation, united in prayer with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. How fervent was this prayer!—how great was the longing which the apostles felt for the coming of the Paraclete, the "Comforter," their Master had promised to them! They now had experience of their own weakness, and felt the need of help. They were no longer full of self-confidence as they once had been, and would not now venture on the generous, but rash, words they had once used: "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both to prison and to death," "Although all shall be scandalized in Thee, yet not I." They now knew that they must rely, not upon their own purposes and good intentions, but on God's help.

And they were united to the Blessed Mother of God.

Mary had been "full of grace" even from the time of the angel's salutation, and she had been, in the most perfect way, the temple of the Holy Ghost; but He was now to descend upon her with the special graces suited to this great day. She was the Mother of our Lord Jesus Christ, and, therefore, the Mother of Divine Grace; but she had been left on earth to be, in a special manner, the nursing Mother of the Christian Church. She was to be the model and guide to the apostles in the great work they had before them, and in her company they prepared for the great gift of Pentecost.

"And when the days of Pentecost were accomplished, they were altogether in one place; and suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them parted tongues, as it were, of fire, and it sat upon every one of them; and they were filled with the Holy Ghost, and they began to speak with divers tongues, according as the Holy Ghost gave them to speak" (Acts ii. 1).

Nothing shows us the special meaning and importance of the descent of the Holy Spirit more forcibly than the day chosen for its accomplishment. Pentecost was the feast celebrated on the fiftieth day after the Pasch, and was to commemorate the giving of the law. When the children of Israel had come out of Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea, on the fiftieth day they came to Mount Sinai, and there it was that God made His solemn covenant with them, that they should be His people, and He should be their God. "If, therefore, you will hear my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my peculiar possession above all people; for all the earth is mine. And you shall be to me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation" (Exod. xix. 5). Hitherto they had been but the family of Jacob; but when they had received the law on the day of Pentecost, they became, in a formal manner, the people of God upon earth.

This same day is chosen for the inauguration of the Church of God. The Paschal Lamb had been the type of Christ's Passion, and so our Lord chose that the

giving of the law on Mount Sinai should be the forerunner of the solemn establishment of His Church. Hitherto it had been the family of our Lord; now it was to go forth into the world as the Church of the Living God. "The multitude came together, and were confounded in mind, because that every man heard them speak in his own tongue. And they were all amazed and wondered, saying, Behold, are not all these that speak Galileans, and how have we heard every man our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and inhabitants of Mesopotamia, Judea, and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Lybia about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews also, and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians: we have heard them speak, in our own tongues, the wonderful works of God" (Acts ii. 6).

Such was the fitting birthday of the Catholic Church. It was no longer the religion of a tribe or a country, but it was to be the Church of the whole earth. Devout men were collected together, "out of every nation under heaven," and to them all, on this day, was the Word of God addressed by the mouths of the apostles. "Yea, verily, their sound had gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 10). The echo, as it were, of this first voice of the Holy Spirit to the nations of the earth, has been continued in God's Catholic Church from that day of Pentecost until this present hour.

There is a great resemblance between the first day of Pentecost, when the children of Israel assembled around the mountain of God to hear His Commandments, and the day of Pentecost, when the apostles of Jesus were called together to wait for the coming down of the Holy Spirit; and yet how great and striking was the difference! "Go to the people, and sanctify them to-day and to-morrow, and let them wash their garments. And let them be ready against the third day; for on the third day the Lord will come down, in the sight of all the people, on Mount Sinai. And thou shalt appoint certain limits to the people round about, and thou shalt say to them, Take

heed that you go not up into the mount, and that ye touch not the borders thereof; every one that toucheth the mount, dying, he shall die" (Exod. xix. 10).

How great a difference in spirit is there between the people waiting, in fear and trembling, to hear the voice of the Lord, and the loving assemblage of the brethren and apostles of Jesus praying around His Mother, and looking for the Paraclete, the Comforter, He had promised to them! In these two Pentecosts are displayed the spirit of the Old and New Covenants.

"There came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming." The advent of the Holy Spirit is the coming of a new power upon earth—a power by which the whole earth was to be shaken: a power which this world could not understand, and yet was ever to feel in the midst of it. This was the power which was to establish the Church and kingdom of Christ upon earth: men could see the result, but the motive force was ever concealed from their eyes: it was the stone "cut from the mountain, without hands," which filled the whole earth.

"Parted tongues, as it were, of fire." The Holy Spirit came to bring light and heat upon earth—the two things which are represented to our senses by earthly fire. We need the grace of the Holy Ghost to give light to our understandings, that we may know our way, and, then, fire and fervour to our wills, that we may follow the light given:

"Accende lumen sensibus
Infunde amorem cordibus.
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti."

"Oh, guide our minds with Thy blest light,
With love our hearts inflame;
And with Thy strength, which ne'er decays,
Confirm our mortal frame."

From this fire of the Holy Spirit, all that is holy and beautiful comes. Just as the light of the sun, which appears to be in itself one simple, pure ray, is, nevertheless, divided into a hundred different colours, and gives a different beauty to every one of the beautiful things on earth—so does the grace of the Holy Spirit, which is simple in itself, display itself in a thousand different acts

of virtue. In every direction in which we look, we see, amongst the saints of God, flowers of perfection and holiness, each of which has its beauty from the one source of all excellence—the grace of the Holy Spirit.

If we want to understand the effects which the Spirit of God was to produce on earth, let us first see how great was the change which Pentecost worked upon the apostles. They were, indeed, changed men. No sooner had they received the Spirit of God, than they came forth to preach the Name of Jesus. Hitherto, they had hidden themselves, and were gathered together "for fear of the Jews," but now they were not afraid to speak of their Lord openly before all men: "Therefore, let all the House of Israel know, most certainly, that God hath made both Lord and Christ this same Jesus, whom you have crucified . . . do penance and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 36—38).

The necessary consequence of the coming of the Holy Spirit was zeal: they could not keep back the truth that they knew, but were impelled to spread it throughout the world: "But Peter and John, answering, said to them: If it be just in the sight of God, to hear you rather than God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard" (Acts iv. 19). Let us ask ourselves, my brethren, have we much of this zeal. We hope that we, too, have received the same Spirit of God; but is His Presence made known by our ardent desire to speak in the Name of Jesus? Can we say with St. Paul: "The charity of Christ presses us" (2 Cor. v. 14)? We may be sure, however, that we have but very little of the Spirit of God, if we have not a little of that zeal which was so conspicuous in the apostles.

But the zeal which the apostles showed was not like the ordinary enthusiasm displayed amongst men: it was dependent upon the three great graces which were poured into their hearts by the Spirit of God. The Holy Ghost bestowed upon them the gift of spiritual knowledge.

Our Lord had taught them Himself, but they had not understood. His words, indeed, they understood, but

they had remained producing little effect in their hearts, until the Holy Spirit came upon them. Then they felt the spirit and reality and meaning of what they had heard. The greatness and overwhelming importance of spiritual things came home to their hearts, and what before had been mere words became the greatest of realities. It was "the excellent knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord," with which the Holy Ghost had filled them, that sent forth the apostles with such abundant zeal to preach His name. "As it is written, I believed, for which cause I have spoken; we, also, believe, for which cause we speak also; knowing that He who raised up Jesus will raise up us also with Jesus" (2 Cor. iv. 13).

But mere knowledge by itself was not enough. The Holy Spirit bestowed on the apostles the grace of fortitude. It is hard for us fully to understand how difficult a work it was to preach Jesus crucified for the first time. The cross was at all times "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Gentiles foolishness;" but to preach His name in that very city in which He had suffered so short a time before—in the presence of those very men who themselves had been instigators, or actors, in our Lord's Passion—this was, indeed, a work requiring courage which none but God could bestow.

Those very apostles who so shortly before had been afraid of even the least show of danger, were now able to resist all the authority, the threats and violence of men. They did this, moreover, not in the rash, impetuous way in which they had sometimes acted before, but with that calm, deliberate and gentle courage which the Holy Spirit bestows. "Behold, the men whom you put in prison are in the Temple, standing and teaching the people. . . And the high priest asked them, saying, Commanding, we commanded you that you should not teach in His name; and, behold, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and have a mind to bring the blood of this man upon us. But Peter and the apostles, answering, said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts v. 26).

Here, my dear brethren, we have a grand specimen of

the teaching of the Holy Ghost—a specimen of Christian courage which was not confined to the apostles, but has been seen, in an eminent degree, under the same Divine Guide, in all classes of people, the poor and the weak, the ignorant and little children, as well as in the princes of the people. It is the sort of courage we all have to learn, if we would save our souls, and it is useless to think that any other good qualities will supply its place. We must obtain from the grace of God the courage to stand up for our faith and duty without flinching, and to "obey God rather than man," or else all the rest that we can do is without avail.

The first effect of the coming down of the Holy Ghost was the superabundant power and zeal with which the apostles went forth to preach Jesus, and to establish His Church; but the gift was not a personal one to the apostles. The Holy Spirit had come down to dwell permanently in that corporate body of the Church of which the apostles were the leaders. The in-dwelling presence of the Holy Ghost was to give to this body of men qualities and powers of action which, in a wonderful way, resemble the vitality of the material body. The spiritual life thus bestowed upon the Church, gave her in the first place the power of growth and increasing organization. In the nature of things, the Church must begin as a small and insignificant body, but she must carry, in herself, all that was necessary for expanding, so as to fill the earth. Our Lord Himself compares His Church to a grain of mustard-seed, which is the least of all seeds, but when grown up becomes a great tree; and it is only the spirit of life that brings about this great change. Wherever it goes, however widely it is spread, this community, which was so small in its beginning, is found perfectly organized and suited to the place into which it is grown; and it is found, moreover, always to be organized in the same way, so that there is a perfect harmony between the parts; and this not by any elaborate scheme, but by what man would call a sort of chance, but which, in reality, is nothing else but the spirit of life within it.

How little we read in the Holy Scriptures of the organization of the early Church! We read of the appointment of the seven deacons to assist the apostles almost by accident, as we should say; we read that St. Paul and St. Barnabas "ordained to them priests in every Church;" but, still, very little is said of the means adopted for organizing the multitude of believers that was crowding into the Church—and yet, in a few centuries, when the whole world had been converted, we find everything in its place; that the infant Church has grown and adapted itself to its increased wants, as easily and naturally as the seedling grows into a mighty tree.

The Church was to endure through all ages, and must have the power of adapting itself to the wants of all generations of men. It was not to be the Church of one nation, and to be dependent upon the special institutions of one particular people. It was to pass through all the varied political and social changes which were to come upon the human race, and, for this purpose, it must be a living body, able to accommodate itself to the circumstances of time and place, and yet to maintain one consistent being, and to carry out one unvaried line of conduct. Nothing but the life given to it by the Holy Spirit could enable it to do this.

When, therefore, we see the Catholic Church existing through the varied history of the world, at home with the civilization of the Roman Empire, and equally at home with the hordes of barbarians who broke in pieces that civilization; when we see it surviving the fall of one empire after another, and delivering its message to each in turn, ever changing, and yet always the same, down to our own days, we recognize the great work of Pentecost. "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you." It was the Holy Spirit of God that made a mere collection of men into a living body, able at all times to do the work for which it was sent into the world.

Above all things, however, the Church was to be the teacher of men: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations . . . teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I

have commanded you, and, behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). The one special function of the Church was to teach—and it could not fail in this work without ceasing to exist—and it was to teach, not as one who gives a lesson learned by rote, but as ever ready to supply what was needful to the wants of its hearers. It was to teach, too, not as men teach, in an uncertain wavering way, but, as our Lord Himself did, "as one having power."

It is quite beyond the capacity of men to teach in this way—that is, to teach with decision, clearness, and authority—in spiritual things. No man, however learned or good he may be, can possibly do this of himself, because the truths of revelation are beyond any exertion of human intellect. To have a right to teach and power to teach, in a manner worthy of God, men must have a commission from God, and must be guided by God's Holy Spirit; and it was as a sign of this Divine guidance that the Holy Spirit descended on the apostles in a visible shape.

"It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts xv. 28). See, my brethren, how the Church began its teaching, and it began so soon! We might have supposed that all the questions which would arise during the lifetime of the apostles would have been settled by our Lord Himself. But no! It was His will that in their own time the example should be given of the way in which, in after ages, the Church should settle difficulties, and of the tone of authority in which she should speak.

"It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Even the apostles themselves could not have ventured to speak in this way, if they were not conscious that they were simply acting as the organ of the Holy Spirit. They had before them our Lord's words: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you;" and therefore they spoke boldly.

In the fulness of time the apostles went to their reward in heaven, and left their office to their successors. The men, indeed, changed, but the body remained the

same, and in it there was always the same Spirit of Life, to teach and to act. It mattered but little who the men might be to whom the apostolic office was committed: it was not as individuals that they had a right to speak, but as the mouthpiece of the Holy Ghost.

As time went on, difficulties arose, as the apostle had foretold: "Of your own selves shall arise men speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts xx. 30). Then was heard the voice of the Church speaking in exactly the same tone that the apostles had assumed in Jerusalem. "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." So it was at the First General Council which defined the Catholic faith against those who denied our Lord's Divinity; so it was in those General Councils which condemned the Nestorians and Eutychians, and all who, to use the words of St. John, "dissolved Jesus" by dividing the Personality of our Lord, or confusing His Divine and human natures.

When fifteen centuries had passed, and a great revolt arose against the Church's teaching, the new ideas were answered in precisely the same way. The pastors of the Church declared, in the very tone of the apostles: "It hath seemed good to us, being assembled together." "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," proclaimed the faith in precise and unhesitating terms.

And this voice has not died out in our own days. We have ourselves heard the Church teaching in her most solemn way in the Vatican Council, and have seen the words of the fathers, there assembled, received throughout the whole Church as the voice of God.

"The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth." The work of the Holy Spirit in the Catholic Church is, after all, but a means to the sanctification of individual souls. We are, in the sight of God, not a great assemblage of men, but individual souls created to His image, for each one of whom all His gifts are intended. What the Holy Spirit does for the whole Church as a body, is but a type of what it is His will to work in each Christian soul. We are all the temples of God, and it is the Holy Spirit abiding in us which alone can make us pleas-

ing to God. Of ourselves we can do nothing, but it is the Spirit of God abiding in us which gives worth to all our words and actions. "If any man speak, let him speak as the words of God; if any man minister, let it be as of the power which God administereth, that in all things God may be honoured through Jesus Christ" (1 St. Peter iv. 11).

The Holy Spirit must be our teacher if we would have any true knowledge. "When He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will teach you all truth" (St. John xvi. 13). It is the Holy Ghost alone who can give us the power of understanding the revelation which has been made known to us.

Our Lord sent His spirit on the apostles, not to be their teacher, in the first instance, but to "bring back to their minds," and enable them to understand the truths which He had taught them; so it is the work of the Spirit in each individual soul to make clear and practical the truths which Christ has taught by His Church.

"Know ye not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (1 Cor. iii. 16). When you think of the Holy Ghost descending in glory upon the apostles this day, remember, dear brethren, that you are the temples of the Holy Spirit; that He has chosen you for His dwelling and consecrated you for ever to Himself, and beg of Him once more to light up His sacred fire within your hearts, that you may be worthy of the great dignity to which you have been called.

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXIV.

The Blessed Trinity.

"To the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Tim. i. 17).

ON this day, my dear brethren, we keep the Feast of the Adorable Trinity. We have gone through and celebrated, under the Church's guidance, all the mysteries of man's redemption. We meditated on the Incarnation, and the Nativity at Christmas, with all the tender and loving mysteries of the infancy and hidden life of our Lord; then, after a short interval, came Lent, to prepare us for the Passion and Resurrection of our Lord; and now we have seen the coming down of the Holy Spirit, and the establishment of the Church. When all this is done, the Church comes back once more to adore the deepest and most sublime of all mysteries—the nature of God Himself in His Unity and Trinity.

The world is full of mysteries; we may look whichever way we like, and we find God's creation immeasurably beyond our understanding. In the visible nature, or the intellectual world, or moral world, it is all the same; whether we are astonished by the immensities that science displays to us, or bewildered by the seemingly infinite minuteness of the objects, or by their variety, or their number—in whichever way we turn, the more and the greater are the wonders which come before our eyes.

The marvels of creation ought to prepare us for the mysteries revealed to us in religion. If the common objects of everyday life are so marvellous, if we cannot really get to the bottom of the wonders contained in the least thing that we pick up by the roadside, we ought not to be surprised that we cannot comprehend the nature of that Infinite Being, by whom all things exist. Our rea-

son should teach us that if God is so wonderful in all His creation, He will be infinitely more wonderful and incomprehensible in His own Divine Nature, and we can only say with the apostle: "Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom, and of the knowledge of God!—how incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord, or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 33).

"Now, the Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance. For one is the person of the Father, another of the Son, another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all one—the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal. Such as the Father is, such is the Son, and such is the Holy Ghost. . . . The Father is Almighty, the Son is Almighty, and the Holy Ghost is Almighty; and yet there are not three Almighties, but one Almighty. The Father is God, the Son is God, the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God" *(Athanasian Creed)*.

This, my dear brethren, is the sublime and awful mystery which we are called on to worship on this day. It is the mystery of God's own Being, which none can comprehend but Himself; we cannot pretend to understand how it is, but we must believe and adore, because He has condescended to reveal it to us.

It is not in order to baffle and confound our imagination that these things have been revealed, but to touch our hearts. The great God would have us know Him as He is, as far as it is possible for our finite understandings, that we may have a tender devotion towards Him. The name of the Blessed Trinity was invoked upon us at our Baptism, and has been given to us as our watchword, and defence, and glory; every day, as we sign ourselves with the cross, we renew this invocation, and almost every supplication which we make, is made in the name of the three Persons of the Adorable Trinity: "But Thou, O Lord, art among us, and Thy name is called upon us; forsake us not" (Jer. xiv. 9).

The mystery of the Blessed Trinity is the very foundation of all our religion. It is the most ancient of all mysteries, and it alone is necessary. Creation need not have been, and redemption need not have been, but the Blessed Trinity necessarily exists from all eternity. Before the first created being was made, God, in three divine Persons, had been, from all eternity, alone, independent, and wanting nothing. He needed not the adoration of angels and saints; they could add nothing to His essential glory and happiness. All things, indeed, were made to praise and give glory to the Blessed Trinity, but not because the Almighty stood in need of any glory that creatures could give Him, since all that they had and all that they could possibly give was already His own; "for of Him, and by Him, and in Him are all things, to Him be glory for ever. Amen" (Rom. xi. 36).

But the Blessed Trinity is the first of all mysteries, not only because it existed before all things were made, and was the cause of all, but also because all the other mysteries of the Christian faith are dependent on the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity for their meaning and their very existence. We honour the Divine condescension in the mystery of the Incarnation: it is because "the Word was made flesh," and the "Word was God." It is so great a mystery, because the Word was consubstantial to the Father—"God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God, begotten, not made." Again, when we are devout to the Blessed Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, our devotion is founded on the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity, and we know that He who was "sorrowful even unto death" in the garden of Gethsemane, and hung for three hours on the cross, was truly the Son of God, and that, in the midst of the ignominy of the cross, He "thought it not robbery to be equal to God," and "was heard for His reverence."

When we think of the Holy Spirit coming down upon the apostles, and thank God for the wonders and blessings of the day of Pentecost, it is because we know that this Holy Spirit is "the Lord and Life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son; who, together with

the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified; who spoke by the prophets."

If you want to understand and value as you ought the mysteries of Redemption, you must begin, my dear brethren, by a deep sense of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and a devout and loving adoration for those Three Divine Persons who are united in one Godhead—"the Father of unmeasured majesty, Thy adorably true and only Son, and the Holy Ghost the Paraclete."

In all that is done on earth, we have the Three Persons of the Blessed Trinity working together for the sanctification of man. In the Mass we have the Sacrifice renewed, in which the Eternal Father accepts the oblation offered on our behalf by the only-begotten Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, "who by the Holy Ghost offered Himself unspotted unto God" (Heb. xi. 14); and so in all the other sacraments and prayers and ordinances of religion we have put before us, with more or less distinctness, the great mystery which is the foundation of them all.

The Church goes forth on her mission through the world in the name of the Blessed Trinity: "Going, therefore, teach ye all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19). Her commission runs in the name of the Blessed Trinity, and everything she does is done in this mighty name—her blessings, her prayers, her acts of authority, all go forth in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The mystery of Three Persons in one God is one which to created minds is unfathomable; and, as the apostle tells us, "the things also that are of God no man knoweth but the Spirit of God"—the Spirit "which searcheth the deep things of God" (1 Cor. 2, 10—11). The mystery of the being of God is, perhaps, revealed to us, that, when, the faith presents to us many wonderful and mysterious things, we may not be startled. If in Himself He is unfathomable and incomprehensible, we need not be surprised if we find that His ways are wonderful and His judgments unsearchable. How can the mysteries of redemption and sanctification of man be otherwise than

marvellous, since they all depend on so wonderful a mystery as that of the Blessed Trinity? When once we have adored the Eternal God, who exists of Himself from all eternity—who fills heaven and earth with His presence, and is infinite in all perfection—who is Three Persons and One God, can we find anything in His works or His dealings with His creature so wonderful as to be a difficulty to us? May we not say that all mysteries are swallowed up in this one great and most sublime truth?

But, as I said, the mystery is revealed to us not merely as a speculative truth, but as something to touch our hearts and affect our lives, and our Lord condescended to put the Blessed Trinity before us as an example, and to pray for us, that we may be united, after the pattern of the Three Persons in One God. "And not for them only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in us" (St. John xvii. 20).

Here we have the most beautiful example of unity—of the corporate unity which is ever to be the distinguishing mark of the Catholic, that they shall be "one body and one spirit"—one as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one—and an example, also, to come to individuals of the unity and brotherly feeling which ought to unite Christians together. "Careful to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. One body and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Eph. iv. 3). Of ourselves, my dear brethren, we should not have dared to take for our pattern the ineffable unity of the Divine nature; but, as our Lord has been pleased to put this before us for our example, let us always remember we are all united as children and servants of the Blessed Trinity, whose name has been invoked upon us all.

The Feast of the Blessed Trinity gives me a good starting-point for a discussion of the "Articles of the Creed." In the Catechism you will find that most of the Christian doctrine is delivered in the shape of instruc-

tions on the twelve Articles of the Apostles Creed; it is, therefore, very desirable to go over this ground, and discuss in detail the great doctrines of which the Catechism speaks.

The Catechism begins by saying that "The chief things which God has revealed are contained in the Apostles' Creed." I must, therefore, speak about "Creeds," or symbols of faith; of how many creeds there are, and how they are alike, and in what they differ, and why they differ at all. A creed is a solemn form of words, drawn up by the authority of the Church, to express the Catholic belief in the plainest and most concise way possible. There are three creeds which are in use in the Catholic Church, which are the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Creed of Pope Pius IV. Besides these, there is the Creed of St. Athanasius, about the Holy Trinity, but this, though adopted by the Church, and recited in the Divine Office, cannot, in the strictest sense, be called a creed, as it is not used exactly as a confession of faith.

The Apostles' Creed is from time immemorial. It is so called, because it comes down from apostolic times, and there is no record of when, or how, it was first written. It is the familiar creed which we all learned in childhood, and forms part of our daily prayer. Next comes the Nicene Creed, which is the confession of faith the Church publicly makes on solemn occasions. It is said in the Mass on every great feast, and on all the Sundays throughout the year, on the feasts of the apostles and doctors, and on many other occasions.

This creed was first put forth as the expression of the Catholic faith by the Fathers of the First General Council—that of Nicea—and was completed by the Second General Council, at Constantinople, in 381. In these two Councils the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity was decided, and the errors contrary to it were condemned, so that the Nicene Creed is, specially, a confession of the Church's faith in the Blessed Trinity.

These creeds agree together, and yet differ, because one is the completion of the other; the faith declared by one

is more clearly expressed by the other, and is put into words which defy misconstruction, or, at any rate, put an end to the misconstructions which were prevalent at the time. This is well illustrated in the words in which the Divinity of our Lord are confessed. The Apostles' Creed merely says: "And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord." This was quite enough for more than three centuries, and martyrs died for the Divinity of our Lord, and confessors gave up all the world could offer for His sake, without requiring any more exact declaration. But when the question had once been raised—as it was raised in the fourth century—as to what was the precise meaning of "His only Son, our Lord," it must be answered at once, and the answer came thus, in the words of the Nicene Creed: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages; God of God; Light of Light; true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial with the Father, by whom all things were made."

Now, at least, there can be no mistaking the Church's doctrine; and the real meaning of the Apostles' Creed, if it was uncertain in itself, is put beyond all doubt. This is the way in which one creed differs from another—and each creed essentially and necessarily contains in itself the power of expansion—of being more fully set out and explained—in the profession which it makes of believing in the Catholic Church. What else does this profession mean, except to refer its teaching to the judgment and explanation of a living authority upon earth?

The other creed commonly used in the Church is the Creed of Pope Pius IV. This was drawn up after the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century, and contains the decision of the Church on all the matters which were disputed at the Reformation. It begins by reciting the Nicene Creed, and goes on to speak of ecclesiastical tradition, the Sacraments, the Real Presence, the Mass, Purgatory, the devotion paid to saints, and the supremacy of the Pope. Towards the conclusion, this sentence has now been introduced: "Moreover, I undoubtingly receive and confess all the other things delivered, defined

and declared by the Sacred Canons and Œcumenical Councils, and, in particular, by the most holy Council of Trent, and by the Œcumenical Council of the Vatican, especially about the primacy and infallible teaching authority of the Roman Pontiff." The profession of faith concludes with these solemn words: "I, ——, promise, vow and swear this. So help me God, and His holy Gospel!"

The Creed of Pope Pius IV. is used on all solemn occasions—very often, for instance, when converts are received into the Church—and it is commonly used when the bishops and clergy meet in provincial and diocesan synods, and by those who are appointed to ecclesiatical offices.

The Apostles' Creed is divided into twelve parts, or articles, and the Catechism, in explanation, treats first of the mystery of the Blessed Trinity and of the Divine Nature. It begins by speaking of the nature of God. "God is the Supreme Spirit, who exists of Himself, and is infinite in all perfections." "Now this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent" (St. John xvii. 3). The very foundation of all religion is the knowledge of God—not a mere intellectual and speculative knowledge, but a deep sense of God's greatness and majesty. "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be perfect" (Gen. xvii. 1). This was the one command that God gave to Abraham; the two things went together—walking before God and the practice of perfection. In proportion as we walk with God, and keep Him always before us, will our real sanctity and perfection be great, and all religion which is not founded on any real appreciation of the majesty and greatness of God, is a mere external thing, which has not any real strength.

To "know God," we must first have an idea of the greatness of God—that He is infinite and infinitely high above all His creatures. Let us dwell upon the words of St. Paul: "God who made the world and all things therein, He being Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth

not in temples made with hands, neither is He served with men's hands, as though He needeth anything, seeing it is He who giveth unto all life and breath and all things; and hath made of one all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth, determining appointed times and the limits of their habitation, that they should seek God, if haply they may feel after Him or find Him, although He is not far from every one of us; for in Him we live and move and have our being" (Acts xvii. 24).

Almighty God has imprinted a knowledge of Himself on all mankind, and every man feels within himself a witness to God and to His greatness. The first idea by which we know God is that of Father. As St. Paul says, "The Spirit giveth testimony to our spirit, that we are the sons of God" (Rom. viii. 16). He is the universal Father of all creation, "from whom all paternity in heaven and earth is named" (Eph. iii. 15), and He delights to be called Father. "Our Father, who art in heaven," thus it is that God would be known to His creatures. Let us always, then, think of Him as our Father, and have a real filial reverence for Him, and then we cannot be far wrong in our conception of Him. "Thee, the Father everlasting, all the earth doth worship. To Thee the angels, to Thee the heavens and all the powers, to Thee the cherubim and seraphim cry out without ceasing, Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth: full are the heavens and the earth of the majesty of Thy glory."

The Lord God is the Father of all beings—of the mighty angels who surround His throne, and of the meanest of created things; they are all His children, and they are equally dependent upon His bounty. "Thou openest Thy hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature." "All expect of Thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest them they shall gather up. When Thou openest Thy hand they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turn away Thy face they shall be troubled. Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust (Ps. cxliv. 16; ciii. 27).

But, if all creation hangs upon the word of this Almighty Father, how much more lovingly and confidently should we approach Him, my dear brethren, since we are not only His creatures, but are, by Baptism, in a special way His adopted children, and the brethren of His only-begotten Son? "For you have not received the spirit of bondage again in fear; but you have received the spirit of adoption of sons, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Rom. viii. 15). We know that God is our Father, and when we are in need, and no other can help us, then we call upon Him for aid; but at other times how few there are who give Him the love and reverence of children! "The son knoweth the father, and the servant his master: if, then, I be a father, where is my honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 6). May not Almighty God say this of Christians, as He had once of the Jewish people?

Almighty God is the life and the light of all creation; "in Him we live, and move, and have our being." Think, my brethren, of that teeming life that fills earth, air, and ocean; of that seemingly infinite vitality with which creation is filled, and then think that it is the great God that made all things live, the little and the great—that it is from the unbounded life that is in Him that they are alive, and that they are, as it were, but drops from His infinite ocean of being. The more widely science opens to us the grandeurs of creation, and shows that every part of it is full of life and wonder, the greater must ever be our admiration and adoration of Him from whom all life comes.

"In Him was life, and life was the light of men, and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it" (St. John i. 4). This world is to our mind a place of darkness and confusion. Many things, indeed, men can see, but those things the soul wants to understand—the things that are to her peace—of herself she cannot see; and the one source of light is that great God, who alone can give to His creatures the light they need; "for with Thee is the fountain of life, and in Thy light we shall see light" (Ps. xxxv. 10).

By the instinct of our nature we know God as our Father, and as the Life and Light of all who live, even without the more abundant knowledge of His bounty and love given to us by revelation; and our great duty through life is to keep this knowledge before us. Contact with the world, with its business and its pleasures, the constant use which we have to make of creatures, has a tendency to efface the image of God from our souls, and it is only by thought and prayer that we can keep it fresh and clear in our hearts. Those who do so can easily "walk before God and be perfect;" those who allow the thought of God to grow dim within them are in the greatest danger of turning their backs upon Him, and of "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25).

From this first idea of God in Himself comes the thought of what He is to us, and first that He is everywhere present. He it is who gives being, and life, and power to everything in creation, and in every part of creation His presence must be. "If Thou turn away Thy face, they shall be troubled, they shall fail, and shall return to their dust." Everywhere, and in everything, God must be; His presence must be in all things, from the most minute of created beings, to the furthest bounds of the universe that man can discover, and beyond that, through infinite space. "Whither shall I go from Thy spirit, or whither shall I flee from Thy face? If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me. And I said perhaps darkness shall cover me, and night shall be my light in my pleasures. But darkness shall not be dark to Thee, and night shall be light as the day: the darkness thereof and the light thereof are alike to Thee" (Ps. cxxxviii. 7).

This thought of the presence of God is an overwhelming thought, if only we dwell upon it. It is a thought which subdues and controls, whilst also it guides and encourages, the heart of man. How many sinners, my dear brethren, have been converted by simply dwelling

on this universal presence of God—how many saints have been led on to perfection, and brought safely through every trial, by constantly remembering it! Or, rather, may we not say that it is the one great thought that has made saints, and that those who dwell much upon it must almost necessarily lead holy lives?

But it is not merely that God is present, but the manner of His presence, which is so overwhelming; He is present wholly and entirely in every point of creation. It is not as if His presence could be divided, and He could be partly in one place and partly in another, but He is everywhere, with the whole infinite perfection and immensity of His Godhead. He is "not far from every one of us"—He is wholly and entirely in the body and soul of each one of us, as if nothing else existed, and, at the same time, He is present, with the same majesty—He is wholly and entirely present at the most distant point of the universe. Such is the idea of the presence of God which is borne in upon our souls—such His presence *must* be—there is no other way conceivable—and yet how wonderful! Who can understand this Infinite God, the very idea of whose presence is so utterly beyond the reason or the imagination of His creatures? What can we say, what can we do, in the presence of this incomprehensible and all-glorious Lord? "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; and of His greatness there is no end. Generation and generation shall praise Thy works, and they shall declare Thy power" (Ps. cxliv. 3).

On this Feast of the Blessed Trinity, then, my dear brethren, let us bow down and worship the infinite greatness of our God—let us thank Him for having deigned to reveal to men the hidden mystery of His Divine nature, that as, by this revelation, we, in some sort, share in the knowledge of the angels, we may join with them in the humble worship and adoration which they pay without ceasing to "the Father of incomprehensible majesty, the adorable, true and only Son, and the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete," three Persons and one God, "to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXV.

The Divine Nature.

"As the Father hath life in Himself, so He hath given to the Son also to have life in Himself" (St. John v. 26).

In these words, my dear brethren, our Lord seems to point out to us the essential character of Almighty God, which places at once an infinite distance between Him and all His creatures. He "has life in Himself," whereas the life of all created beings is but a life dependent upon Him and upheld by Him. He "exists of Himself, and is infinite in all perfections." It enters into the very idea and thought of God that He exists necessarily, and He cannot possibly be conceived, or thought of, as not existing. This world, and all that is in it, might have been or not have been, or thousands of other and different worlds might have been created instead of it. "They shall grow old as a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Heb. i. 11). There may be a new heaven and a new earth, but He who created heaven and earth cannot be conceived as not existing or as changed: He has "life in Himself."

This self-existence is expressed in the name by which the Almighty chose to be known to His people. "Moses said to God, Lo, I shall go to the children of Israel and say to them, The God of your fathers hath sent me to you. If they should say to me, What is His name? what shall I say to them? God said to Moses, I am who am. He said, Thus shalt thou say to the children of Israel, He who is hath sent me to you" (Exod. iii. 13). So, again, when the Jews said to our Lord, "Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus

said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am" (St. John viii. 57).

Creatures are made, and become old and pass away; but through all eternity God is; by the necessity of His own Divine nature, He exists for ever in one unpassing, unchanging, and unchangeable Being, in which "there is no change nor shadow of alteration" (St. James i. 17).

In this essential Divine attribute of self-existence are contained all the wonders and perfections of the Godhead. Because He exists of Himself and has life in Himself, He is eternal and infinite in all perfections. He fills heaven and earth with His presence, and sees and knows all things, and can do all things. Every attraction and beauty that is to be found in any one of His creatures exists in an eminent and surpassing degree in Him; for the excellence of the creature is but a faint reflection of the infinite glory of the Creator. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider? (Ps. xciii. 9). He that gave beauty and glory, and a thousand perfections and excellences to His creatures, shall He not Himself be beautiful and glorious? Oh, my dear brethren, let us, with the saints, consider how many things, beautiful and admirable and worthy of love, are to be found in this creation, and rise from them to the thought of the infinite and surpassing loveliness of their Creator! "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him" (1 Cor. ii. 9). What mind or heart, then, can conceive, even in the faintest degree, the glory of the Great Creator, who by His word has prepared such things? If His heaven is so great, what is He whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain? If the New Jerusalem—the city where Christ reigns, with His saints—is so glorious, what must He be who fashioned it by His will? If the countless angels who surround His throne are so beautiful, what must that Lord be in the light of whose countenance they all live?

The mind of man cannot conceive the real glory of the Divine presence; but let us dwell on the pictures of His

majesty given in the Holy Scripture. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated; and His train filled the temple. Upon it stood the seraphim: the one had six wings, and the other had six wings; with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And they cried one to another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, the Lord God of Hosts, all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke" (Isaias vi. 1). Again, "I beheld till thrones were placed, and the Ancient of days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire: the wheels of it like a burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him; thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him" (Daniel vii. 9).

God is eternal: He is the "Ancient of days." "God had no beginning: He always was, He is, and He always will be." Incomprehensible to the poor understanding of man is this wonderful truth—that you may go back, in imagination, millions and millions of ages, and yet, after all, be no nearer to the commencement of God's eternity! The duration of existing things, as described by men of science, is bewildering to our imaginations; but if we put all these possible ages at their longest, still before them there is an eternity, during which God was existing of Himself and by Himself. "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, saith the Lord God, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty" (Apoc. i. 8).

How great is the contrast between the eternal duration of the Creator, and the busy, hurried, passing life of man on earth! How different is our reckoning of time from His! "A thousand years in Thy sight are as yesterday, which is past, and as a watch in the night: as things that are counted nothing shall their years be. In the beginning man shall grow up like grass: in the morning he shall flourish and pass away: in the evening he shall fail, grow dry, and wither" (Ps. lxxxix. 4). Al-

mighty God seems to us slow and long-suffering in His dealings, and men say, as the apostle tells us they did in his time, "Where is His promise or His coming? For since the time that the fathers slept, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 St. Peter iii. 5). But "the Lord is patient, because He is eternal." The justice of God is often long delayed, so that sinners despise His patience, and forget that He is a "patient rewarder," because He is eternal, and that "He dealeth patiently for their sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to penance" (2 St. Peter iii. 9).

We may all, my dear brethren, with advantage, dwell frequently on this passage of Holy Scripture, which describes God's dealings with sinners. "Say not, how mighty am I? and who shall bring me under for my deeds? for God will surely take revenge. Say not, I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me? for the Most High is a patient rewarder. Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and add not sin upon sin. And say not, The mercy of the Lord is great: He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins; for mercy and wrath quickly come from Him, and His wrath looketh upon sinners. Delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day; for His wrath shall come on a sudden, and in the time of vengeance He will destroy thee" (Ecclus. v. 3).

As God, by virtue of His own essence, is eternal—that is, fills every point of time—so does He fill every part of space. "Whither shall I flee from Thy face?" God is unbounded, and knows no limit, and no place can be conceived where He is not.

"Nature cannot hold Thee,
Heaven is all too strait
For Thine endless glory
And Thy royal state.

Out beyond the shining
Of the farthest star
Thou Thyself art stretching,
Infinitely far."

These beautiful words of Father Faber's hymn picture

to us, in some degree, the immensity of God. All His creation, inconceivably great as it appears to us, is as nothing to His immensity. "Behold, the Gentiles are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the smallest grain of a balance: behold, the islands are as a little dust, and Libanus shall not be enough to burn, nor the beasts thereof sufficient for a burnt-offering. All nations are before Him, as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing and vanity. To whom, then, have you likened God? or what image will you make for Him?" (Isaias xl. 15).

Men are tempted to bring down God, in their thoughts, to their own level, and to make Him like to themselves, and they would treat with Him as with one whom they can comprehend, and whose ways are like their ways —but "My thoughts are not your thoughts; nor your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are exalted above the earth, so are my ways exalted above your ways, and my thoughts above your thoughts" (Isaias lv. 8). When we cannot understand the Providence of God, our best remedy is to meditate on the immensity and infinity of God, not as men imagine Him to themselves, but as He has described Himself to us in Holy Scripture, and then we shall have no difficulty in understanding why we cannot comprehend Him as we do one another.

As God is boundless in duration and in immensity, so He is without limit in His perfections. "He is infinite in all perfections:" every attribute of God is without bound: He is infinitely wise, infinitely powerful, infinitely just, infinitely merciful: each one of His attributes, in turn, awes and astonishes us. If we take the terrors of His justice, and meditate upon His judgments, then we may well say, to use the words of Holy Scripture: "Fear seized upon me and trembling, and all my bones were affrighted; and when a spirit passed before me, the hair of my flesh stood up" (Job iv. 14). "The Lord thy God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." "A fire is kindled in my wrath, and shall burn even to the lowest hell: and shall devour the earth with her increase,

and shall burn the foundations of the mountains" (Deut. iv. 24; xxxii. 22).

Again, take the mercy and patience of God, and once more we meet with an infinity. We are bewildered by the wonders of mercy and love displayed in the Incarnation. This great Lord, who is so mighty and terrible, lays aside His dignity to become man: He who is so far off, and so infinitely distant from all His creatures, deigns to share our lot, and to hide Himself in His own creation. The Eternal Word, "who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 6).

If we go to Bethlehem, and see our new-born Saviour, or go to the Holy House of Nazareth, and there contemplate the hidden life of our Lord, what wonders of the Divine condescension are opened to our eyes! Every step of the Passion displays to us inconceivable wonders of His patience and long-suffering. He allows Himself to be rejected and despised by His own people: "Behold we go up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man shall be betrayed to the chief priests and to the Scribes, and they shall condemn Him to death, and shall deliver Him to the Gentiles to be mocked and scourged and crucified" (St. Matt. xx. 18). How must the angels who adored around His throne in heaven have been amazed at the mystery of God's patience with man! The Lord of glory scourged at the pillar, crowned with thorns, and hanging like a criminal at the cross! In his dealings with men, the Almighty displayed a new infinity, which even the minds of archangels could never have conceived—the infinity of patience and love.

How can He who is so terrible in His justice be, at the same time, so infinitely tender and long-suffering? How can we understand or reconcile these attributes? We cannot—but must only bow down and adore, and acknowledge that God is wonderful in all His ways, and beyond all that we can conceive or understand, and once

more say with the apostle: "O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?" (Rom. xi. 33). "O Lord, Thy mercy is in heaven, and Thy truth reacheth even to the clouds. Thy justice is as the mountains of God, Thy judgments are a great abyss" (Psalm xxxv. 7).

God is omnipotent: that is, there are no limits to His power. "The Lord is great, and our God is above all gods. Whatsoever the Lord pleased, He hath done in heaven and in earth, in the sea and in all the deeps." "Our God is in heaven, He hath done all things whatsoever He would" (Psalm cxxxiv. 5; cxiii. 3). The Catechism says: "God is called Almighty because He can do all things: 'with God all things are possible.'" "He is called creator of heaven and earth, because He made heaven and earth, and all things, out of nothing by His Word." All the wonderful and beautiful things around us simply come from the hands of God and exist by His pleasure. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power; because Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc. iv. 11). And, if these existing things were not great enough or good enough, God, by His Word, could create a new heaven and a new earth, each a thousand times more glorious than those that exist: and it is not with Him as with men, to whom work is toil and pain. The mighty works of God are done without the slightest break or change to the infinite rest and eternal repose which belongs to the nature of Him "with whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration." "Praise Him, ye heavens of heavens, and let all the waters that are above the heavens praise the name of the Lord. For He spoke, and they were made; He commanded, and they were created" (Psalm cxlviii. 4).

We are astonished at the fulness and richness of creation: everywhere we look, there is an over-abundance of life that seems to us to be wasted. Why is this earth

filled with riches that no eye will ever see? Why is the heaven studded with an almost infinite number of stars for which we can see no object? This is the work of infinite power; this is but a drop from the storehouse of infinite riches. "How great are Thy works, O Lord! Thou hast made all things in wisdom: the earth is filled with Thy riches. So is this great sea, which stretcheth wide its arms: there are creeping things without number —creatures little and great; there the ships shall go. This sea-dragon which Thou hast formed to play therein. All expect of thee that Thou give them food in season. What Thou givest to them they shall gather up: when Thou openest Thy hand, they shall all be filled with good. But if Thou turn away Thy face, they shall be troubled: Thou shalt take away their breath, and they shall fail, and shall return to their dust. Thou shalt send forth Thy Spirit, and they shall be created: and Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Psalm ciii. 24).

Everything that exists is made for one primary object— to give glory to its Creator and to display His greatness: "The Lord hath made all things for Himself" (Prov. xvi. 4). "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands. Day to day uttereth speech, and night to night showeth knowledge" (Psalm xviii. 2). If even inanimate creatures, in their way, praise God, much more is it the duty of those to whom He has given understanding. "O ye sons of men, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. Ye servants of the Lord, bless the Lord: ye spirits and souls of the just, bless the Lord: praise and exalt Him above all for ever. . . . Give thanks to the Lord, because He is good: because His mercy endureth for ever" (Dan. iii. 82).

The works of the Lord show infinite power, and at the same time infinite wisdom. Everywhere we see the most marvellous unity and harmony of design: in everything there is to be found the reign of law and order— the most perfect simplicity, combined with an almost infinite richness and variety of detail. "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, and number and weight"

(Wisd. xi. 21). In all the works of creation man can follow and trace a mind like, in a sense, to his own, but infinitely greater—that Eternal Mind to whose image man was created.

It is good to dwell on the infinite wisdom of God. Men cannot fail to see that their strength is absolutely as nothing when compared to the power of God: no man ever, for a moment, dreamed that the power of God could be resisted. But men do not realize that the knowledge and wisdom of God are just as much beyond them as His power. Men are exalted by the understanding that God has given them, and think that nothing is beyond their reach, and even that they may enter into judgment with Almighty God Himself:—but the knowledge and understanding of all men together, great as it undoubtedly is, is nothing in the sight of Infinite Wisdom. "Man cannot be justified compared with God: if he will contend with Him, he cannot answer Him one for a thousand" (Job ix. 2).

We now come, my dear brethren, to speak of what concerns us most—the rights which God has over us, and our constant responsibility to Him. Men are too apt to think and speak as if Almighty God were as one of themselves—as if, if I may use such an expression, He were a kind of constitutional King, with whom they could make their own terms. He is, in reality, the absolute and supreme Lord over all His creatures, and they have no rights, but what He in His goodness gives them, and the only attitude which they can assume towards Him is that of humble and abject submission. "Cannot I do with you, as this potter, O house of Israel, saith the Lord? Behold, as the clay is in the hand of the potter, so are you in my hand, O house of Israel" (Jer. xviii. 6). In the prophet Isaias we find the same figure of speech: "This thought of yours is perverse: as if the clay should think against the potter, and the work should say to the maker thereof, Thou madest me not; or the thing framed should say to him that fashioned it, Thou understandest not." And again: "Wo to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a shred of the earthen pots: shall the clay say to him

that fashioned it: What art thou making?" (Isaias xxix. 16; xlv. 9).

We are all of us, in the hands of our Maker, like the clay, and our one right and duty is to do His will. "As the potter's clay is in his hand to fashion and order it, all his ways are according to his ordering, so man is in the hand of Him that made him, and He will render to him according to His judgment" (Ecclus. xxxiii. 13). Let us listen to the words of the Almighty Himself: "See ye that I alone am, and there is no other God beside me. I will kill and I will make to live: I will strike and I will heal, and there is none that can deliver out of my hand. I will lift up my hand to heaven and I will say: I live for ever. If I shall whet my sword as the lightning, and my hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to my enemies, and repay them that hate me" (Deut. xxxii. 29).

The duties which we owe to Almighty God necessarily come before all others; indeed, we owe nothing directly to any creature. Our duties and obligations to others come from the duty which we owe to our Creator, and are absolutely dependent upon it. If, then, we allow anything, however good or noble it may seem to be—whether duties to parents or kindred, to country or humanity generally—to interfere with the supreme duty which we owe to God, we are committing an injustice.

The Catechism tells us that "we must hate sin above all other evils, so as to be resolved never to commit a wilful sin, for the love or fear of anything whatsoever." God is so great, that anything which is an offence against Him is, of its own nature, an immensely greater evil than anything else that can happen; indeed, as He is infinitely great, sin is, in a sense, an infinite evil. You sometimes hear people foolishly speak of "small sins," as if any sin could be otherwise than a great evil. It is so great, that no possible consideration, either for yourself or for others, can make it right to commit a sin. If you could gain the whole world, or save the whole world, by one sin, it must not be done, and you would be with-

out excuse if you did it, because it is an offence against your Creator.

We speak, indeed, of venial sins—and people sometimes imagine that *venial* means trifling, or of no importance—but nothing that is displeasing to Almighty God can possibly be trifling. It is true that God more easily pardons some sins—those, particularly, which are rather from weakness than from malice—but we cannot tell how great the atonement which His justice may require for venial sin. It is a painful thing to hear Christians talk as if sins were sometimes necessary and unavoidable: when, for instance, you hear people say that they were *obliged* to tell a lie to avoid some evil consequence, or to save some friend. What is this but saying that you care more about some trifling inconvenience than you do about the friendship of God? "Be not without fear for sin forgiven, and add not sin to sin" (Ecclus. v. 5). The Holy Scripture is full of instances in which Almighty God has punished with terrible severity even things which to us would appear comparatively unimportant; so let us never think that any sin is trifling.

"God knows and sees all things, even our most secret thoughts" (Catechism). This is the great thought which will keep us from sin, and encourage us in the practice of virtue. "Your Father seeth in secret." Listen to our Lord's words: "When thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth: that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee; when thou shalt pray, enter thou into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 3).

It is an awful thing to think that every idea and imagination of our whole lives, every motion and act of our wills, is plain and open in the sight of God. Not a foolish thought of youth, or an ambition of manhood, has escaped His all-seeing vision, and He sees not as we ourselves do, in a confused and imperfect manner, but with a perfect comprehension and unerring judgment.

"Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom our speech is" (Heb. iv. 14).

Men are constantly deceiving themselves as to their own motives, and sometimes succeed in making evil look like good, or, at any rate, hide from their own eyes the imperfection of their works; but, in the sight of God, every thought, word, and deed is weighed in a just balance, and "every man's work is manifest." This thought ought to be a terror to the wicked, but it is the consolation of those who are trying to serve God. Everything we do is appreciated by Him—even "a cup of cold water" given for His sake; He knows the labour and pain that even trifling things cost us, and will repay us, not according to the value of what we have done, but according to our motives in doing it. Let us, then, my dear brethren, keep alive in our hearts the sense of God's presence, and of our responsibility to Him, for on this all religion depends, and it is the sure way to avoid sin.

We will conclude by considering what is the great duty which, as creatures, we owe to our Almighty Creator. We owe Him an unlimited obedience; whatever it may be His will to ask, we must be ready to give, even if it involve the sacrifice of all we have. "The Lord hath need of it," that is sufficient for us. When Almighty God commanded Abraham to "go forth from his country, and from his kindred, and out of his father's house," and afterwards to "take his only-begotten son Isaac, whom he loved, and offer him for a holocaust," He only asked what was, in the strictest way, a right—a right which could not have been refused without an injustice and a crime. Obedience is the first of all duties, and any service which is not founded upon strict obedience is a mockery, and almost an insult. "Obedience is better than sacrifice; "it is like the sin of witchcraft to rebel, and like the crime of idolatry to refuse to obey" (1 Kings xv. 22). These are words which we should have constantly before us.

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXVI.

The Incarnation.

"Every spirit which confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is of God; and every spirit that dissolveth Jesus, is not of God, and this is Antichrist" (1 St. John iv. 2).

The sign of the cross, my dear brethren, is one of the distinguishing marks of the Catholic faith. Catholics use this holy sign on all occasions; they have it repeated, again and again, in their churches and in their houses; they have it everywhere, in images and in pictures, and on all occasions they sign it on themselves. Nothing can give a worse idea of the faith and practice of a Catholic than to find him ashamed of the sign of the cross. If, for example, you never see the figure of the cross in his house, and he is afraid to bless himself with the sign of the cross if strangers are present, you may be quite sure that his religion is not quite what it should be.

The sign of the cross is the symbol and token of our Lord's Incarnation—it is the "sign of the Son of Man," by which we constantly remind ourselves that the great God became man, and, as man, deigned to suffer for us. We keep the image of Jesus crucified about us, and in our houses, and we sign ourselves with the sign of His cross as a token that we place all our hopes in His Incarnation and Passion. Every time we make the sign of the cross, we are making a hasty, but real, profession of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, God and man—in His Incarnation and His Passion.

When taken with the words which are commonly pronounced at the same time, the sign of the cross also puts us in mind of the Blessed Trinity. "We make the sign of the cross," the Catechism tells us, "*first* to put us in mind of the Blessed Trinity, and, *secondly*, to remind us that God the Son died upon the cross for us." By this

simple sign, then, we are constantly calling to mind the two great mysteries which are the foundation of the Christian faith, and not only reminding ourselves, but also making a public profession of them.

When we make the sign of the cross, we must remember that we are using that symbol which, from the beginning, the Catholic Church has adopted as the sign of the Son of Man. It was the sign in which the martyrs of the early Church went forth to victory—it was the sign by which the early Christians fortified themselves against all the temptations of the pagan world that surrounded them; it is a precious legacy of faith and devotion, left us by our forefathers in the faith ever since the earliest ages.

Tertullian, the earliest father of the Latin Church, thus describes the custom of the Christians in his time: "In all our travels and movements, in all our coming in and going out, in putting on our clothes and shoes, at the bath, at the table, in lighting our lamps, in lying down, in sitting down, whatever employment occupies us, we mark our forehead with the sign of the cross." This father, who writes two hundred years after Christ, speaks of the custom of making the sign of the cross, not as of a new thing, but as of a well-established usage of the Church. To pass over two centuries, we find St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, saying: "Let us not, therefore, be ashamed of the cross of Christ; but, even though another hide it, do thou openly seal it on thy brow, that the devils, beholding that royal sign, may flee far away, trembling. But thou make this sign when thou eatest and drinkest, sittest or liest down, risest up, speakest, walkest—in a word, on every occasion; for He who was here crucified is above in the heavens. . . Let none be weary; take up arms against the adversaries in the cause of the cross itself; set up the faith of the cross as a trophy against the gainsayers. For when thou art about to dispute with unbelievers concerning the cross of Christ, first make with the right hand the sign of the cross of Christ, and the gainsayer will be dumb. Be not ashamed to confess the cross. . . . Let us not, then, be

ashamed to confess the Crucified. Let the cross become our seal, made with boldness by our fingers upon the forehead, on everything—on the bread we eat and the cup we drink, in our comings in and goings out, before we sleep, when we lie down, and when we awake, when we are walking and when we are still. Great is that preservative; it is gratuitous for the poor's sake; without toil, for the sake of the weak, since also its grace is from God; it is the sign of the faithful, and the dread of devils. 'For He has triumphed over them in it, having exposed them confidently in open show' (Colos. ii. 15). For when they see the cross, they are reminded of the Crucified; they are afraid of Him who has bruised the heads of the dragon. Do not despise the seal because it is a free gift, but for this, the rather, honour the benefactor" *(Faith of Catholics, Vol. III. pp.* 430, 433).

I have given this long extract, my dear brethren, that the example of our Christian forefathers may encourage us boldly to use this holy sign, on all occasions, and to use it in such a manner that it may really be an act of faith and devotion to our Lord Incarnate.

I want, in this sermon, to speak of the mystery of the Incarnation—the mystery of mysteries—on which the Christian faith is founded. This great mystery rests, as we have said, on the great primeval mystery of the Blessed Trinity. As that is the great mystery of God in Himself, so is the Incarnation the great mystery of God in His dealings with His creatures. He became Incarnate, and took upon Himself a finite nature, that He might, in a certain sense, come down from His infinity, and condescend to the littleness of created beings. He placed Himself, as far as was possible, on the level of His own creation, that His creatures might be brought near to Him, and so might better understand Him and love Him.

"By the Incarnation, I mean that God the Son took to Himself the nature of man. The Word was made flesh" (Catechism). The first thing to consider is the Divinity of our Lord. The Catechism gives us the Catholic faith in these words: "Is Jesus Christ truly God? Yes:

Jesus Christ is truly God. Why is Jesus Christ truly God? Jesus Christ is truly God, because He has one and the same nature with God the Father. Was Jesus Christ always God? Yes: Jesus Christ was always God, born of the Father from all eternity. Which Person of the Blessed Trinity is Jesus Christ? Jesus Christ is the Second Person of the Blessed Trinity."

The reality and truth of our Lord's Divinity was the first great question to be defined in the early Church. The distance between the greatest of all conceivable creatures and the Almighty Creator is so vast, that, if He was not God in the truest sense—God equal to the Father—the whole mystery of the Incarnation would be as nothing in comparison. He would then be only a creature; and, when compared with the Creator, would be but on a level with ourselves. Nothing could be done till this great truth was placed beyond doubt. The Church, therefore, decided the question in those unmistakable words of the Nicene Creed, which I have already quoted several times: "And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, and born of the Father before all ages; God of God, Light of Light, true God of true God; begotten, not made; consubstantial to the Father, by whom all things were made, who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man." He was of the same Divine nature with God the Father, and "consubstantial to Him." He was the true God and the true Light, "begotten, not made;" He was God from all eternity, "by whom all things were made."

Let us look into the Holy Scriptures, my dear brethren, and see how this great truth is put before us in the words of Inspiration. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him, and without Him was made nothing that was made. In Him was Life, and the Life was the Light of men, and the Light shineth in darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it . . . that was the true Light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this

world. He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not . . . and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt amongst us; and we saw His glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" (St. John i. 1).

Listen, again, to St. Paul's solemn words: "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but debased Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man" (Phil. ii. 6).

But what are our Lord's own words? "As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son also to have life in Himself" (St. John v. 26). "Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day; he saw it, and was glad. The Jews, therefore, said to Him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast Thou seen Abraham? Jesus said to them, Amen, amen, I say to you, before Abraham was made, I am" (St. John viii. 56). In these words our Lord declares Himself to be that eternal Lord who is from all eternity, and in Himself has life. Again He says: "I and the Father are one;" and, "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? The words that I speak to you, I speak not of myself, but the Father who abideth in me, He doth the works. Believe you not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?" (St. John xiv. 10).

In these words directly, and, implicitly in almost every word and action of His life on earth, our Lord declares His Divinity, and He asks us to confess Him for our God, as St. Peter did when he said: "Thou art Christ, the Son of the Living God."

But it is not enough to confess our Lord to be God; we must acknowledge Him also as man. He seems, in a special manner, to delight to be called the "Son of Man." The wise men offered gold, frankincense and myrrh to our Lord in the stable at Bethlehem, and this myrrh was the symbol of mortality. St. Gregory says: "There are some who confess Him to be God and King, but deny that He assumed human flesh. These, indeed, offer Him

gold and frankincense, but refuse Him the myrrh of His assumed mortality."

The Catechism, therefore, explains very carefully the reality of His human nature. "Jesus Christ is truly man. Why is He truly man? Jesus Christ is truly man, because He has the nature of man, having a body and soul like ours. Was He always man? No; Jesus Christ was not always man. He has been man only from the time of his Incarnation."

When we say that Christ is man, we mean that He has a complete and perfect human nature, identical with our own nature, having a body and soul like ours, and resembling us in all things except sin. "For we have not a high priest, who cannot have compassion on our infirmities; but one tempted in all things like as we are, without sin" (Heb. iv. 15).

The Athanasian Creed explains this to us beautifully in these words: "Now, this is the right faith, that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is both God and man. He is God of the substance of His Father, begotten before all ages; and He is man of the substance of His Mother, born in time; perfect God and perfect man; subsisting of rational soul and human flesh. Equal to the Father, according to His Godhead; and less than the Father, according to His manhood. Who, although He be both God and man, yet He is not two, but one, Christ. One, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God. One altogether, not by confusion of substance, but by unity of Person. For as the rational soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ."

The Catechism says: "There are two natures in Jesus Christ, the nature of God and the nature of man. Are there also two Persons in Jesus Christ? No; in Jesus Christ there is only one Person, which is the Person of God the Son." It may appear, at first sight, that it is not of any great importance to dwell so much on the Persons and Natures of our Lord, but, in reality, the whole doctrine of the Incarnation turns on these points.

Those who teach erroneous doctrine as to the Person or the two natures of Christ, are, in fact, as the apostle says, "dissolving Christ," and making void the whole mystery of the Incarnation.

When the great attempt of the Arian heresy to deny the Divinity of our Lord was defeated by the Church's decision that He was "consubstantial to the Father," another error was introduced, which did not, indeed, deny the Divinity of our Lord, but said that there were in Him two Persons—a Divine Person and a human Person; that the human Person came upon earth and walked with man—that it was the human Person which was nailed to the cross, and, consequently, that Mary was not the Mother of God, but only the Mother of the human Person. This, in reality, came to very much the same as saying that our Lord was not God, and so it was felt by the instinct of the faithful.

A General Council was called at Ephesus to consider the new teaching, and the Fathers, as the most conclusive way of deciding the question practically, pronounced that Mary was, and was to be called, the "Mother of God." But the feeling of the people would hardly wait for the formal decision of the Council. The inhabitants of Ephesus besieged the church doors the whole day in anxious expectation, and when the decision was publicly announced the multitude broke into enthusiastic transports of joy, and "Mary, Mother of God," was in every mouth, and the whole city was illuminated.

The next attack on the doctrine of the Incarnation was made by the Eutychian heresy, not long after the Nestorians had been condemned. In our Lord, the Eutychians taught, there was only one Person, and this Divine Person had only one nature. From this doctrine it followed that all that our Lord had seemed to do for us on earth was a delusion. He was God only, and, therefore, He could neither suffer nor die. He had not really come down to the level of His creatures, by sharing the nature of man, and His actions on earth were not real human actions. This doctrine was repeated in different forms, all, directly or indirectly, denying the

human nature, and became one of the deadliest heresies which ever waged war against the Church.

These questions, then, of the Person and natures of our Lord are not mere scholastic questions, but the great practical doctrines on which Christianity turns. In the Divine Person of Jesus Christ, the Lord God came down on earth to raise us to heaven: is He truly the "Child born to us, the Son given to us," whom we are to acknowledge and love as our brother? This is the great truth these heresies attacked.

About these errors St. Augustine speaks in these strong terms: "Therefore are utterly to be loathed those pestiferous teachings of Eastern falsehood, those brand-new inventions of ungodliness, which dare to assert that He who in one Person is both Son of God and Son of man, hath but one nature. On the one hand, if a man say that Christ is not partaker of the Divine Nature, he hath denied the glory of his Maker; on the other, he who saith that the Manhood is not of the nature of man, hath denied the mercy of his Saviour. As touching these points, it is well-nigh impossible for an Arian to believe that the Gospel writers are any better than liars, since they distinctly assert, in some places, that the Son of God is equal, and, in others, that He is inferior to the Father. Farther, if a man be given over to this soul-slaying delusion of believing that our Saviour hath only one nature, he must, of necessity, admit either that it was only God, or that it was only man who was crucified. But it was not so. If He had been of no nature but the Divine, He could not have suffered; and if He had been of no nature but the human, He could not have conquered death" *(Breviary Lesson)*.

The Eutychian heresy was condemned at the fourth General Council in 451. The Pope, St. Leo the Great, assembled 500 of the Eastern Bishops at Chalcedon, a town in Asia, close to Constantinople, and presided over them by his legate. The Pope's letter defining the faith was read, and the Fathers of the Council cried out, "Peter hath spoken by the mouth of Leo," and then made a decree almost in the terms of the Athanasian Creed, which

I have already given. "We unanimously declare," they said, "that all must confess one and the same Jesus Christ our Lord: perfect in Divinity and perfect in humanity, true God and true man: possessing a reasonable soul and a body: consubstantial with the Father in Divinity, and consubstantial with us in humanity; like to us in everything save sin; begotten of the Father before all ages, as to His Divinity: in these last times born of the Virgin Mary, as to His humanity, for us and for our salvation: one and the same Jesus Christ, only Son, Lord, in two natures, without confusion, without change, without division, without separation: in whom this union hinders not the difference of natures: on the contrary, preserved to each what is its own, they meet in one single person, in one hypostasis: so that Jesus Christ is not divided into two Persons, but is one and the same Lord, the Word, the only Son of God."

The life of our Lord on earth is continually putting before us His two natures. He exhibits the power of God, and, at the same time, the weakness and suffering of man. The angels sing songs of gladness at His birth, and pay their homage as to their new-born King, and the star guides His subjects from the East to adore Him; but then come the Circumcision and the flight into Egypt, in which He pleases to display the weakness of His human nature. We see our Lord walking on the Sea of Galilee, and stilling its tempests by His word; or we see Him standing at the tomb of Lazarus. The power of God is before us, and we listen to the words of God, "Lazarus, come forth!" "I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, although he be dead, shall live; and every one that liveth and believeth in me, shall not die for ever" (St. John xi. 25). Or, again, if we place ourselves with Peter, James, and John on Mount Thabor, when "He was transfigured before them. And His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elias talking with Him . . . and as He was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them. And lo! a voice out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son,

in whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him. And the disciples, hearing, fell upon their face, and were much afraid" (St. Matt. xvii. 1). In this glorious scene, my dear brethren, do we not seem to see the beauty and majesty of the Godhead shining through the veil of His human nature?

But Mount Thabor is near to the Garden of Gethsemane, and the glory of the Transfiguration is not far from the ignominy of the cross. "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." In His Divine nature the Lord could know no sorrow; not one breath of pain or disturbance could ever ruffle the eternal tranquillity of the Infinite God. It is the human soul of Christ that suffers. About this St. Ambrose says: "'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.' So, also, elsewhere He saith, 'Now is my soul troubled.' It was not He who hath taken the manhood into God who was troubled, but the manhood which He had so taken. The soul of man is able to be moved by divers feelings, but not so God. 'The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak.' That which was exceeding sorrowful was not Himself, but His soul. The Eternal Wisdom was not sorrowful, the Divine Being was not sorrowful, but the human soul of Jesus was sorrowful."

Let us think of the exceeding bitterness and grief with which the heart of Jesus was overwhelmed in the garden, when He fell on His face and cried, "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass away; but not my will, but Thine, be done." What could He do more, to show us how fully and painfully He shared our nature, than by drinking this cup of ignominy and sorrow, from which His soul recoiled?

But He must suffer in body as well as in soul. He would prove Himself to be truly man, by all the torment of His Passion. In the scourging at the pillar, the crowning with thorns, and in every drop of His Precious Blood which He shed on the cross, we learn the mystery of the Incarnation—that He who was true God was also true man, and, as man, was obedient unto death. Throughout all He was one and the same. "Jesus Christ yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever" (Heb. xiii. 8).

And now, my dear brethren, how can we do our duty to the Incarnate God—to this Sovereign Lord Jesus Christ? What can we give Him? What can we offer that is worthy of Him? Our hearts are cold and our hands are empty. How can we make a sufficient acknowledgment, or give sufficient love to One who has loved us so much, and done so much for us? And yet the apostle says: "If any one love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be anathema" (1 Cor. xvi. 22).

We will think not what He is to the race of men, but what He is to each one of us. He is our Saviour; every one who is redeemed from hell, and enters into the kingdom of heaven, is redeemed by His blood. That vast crowd that surrounds His throne cries out with one voice: "Thou hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood, out of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (Apoc. v. 9). If I am saved, it will certainly be by the merits of the Precious Blood; how, then, ought I to love Him who poured it out for me?

"Of His fulness we all have received," by whatever channel grace has been given to me; whoever the creatures may be who have helped me on my course to eternal life—all that I have received has really come to me from "the fountains of my Saviour." Our Lord is our only Redeemer, "by whom we have access, through faith, into this grace wherein we stand, and glory in the hope of the glory of the Son of God" (Rom. v. 2); and, at the same time, He is our only model. St. Paul says: "Be ye imitators of me, as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. iv. 16). All the examples of holiness that we find amongst creatures are to be imitated only because they are formed on the pattern of the Son of God. He is the great model for all classes of people—for priest and for layman, for young and for old, for rich and for poor; He is our model in our prayers and in our daily duties, in work and in suffering, in life and in death. "Whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29).

If we would be saved, then, we have to strive to make

ourselves like to Him in all things, and the more closely we imitate Him in our lives, the greater will be our perfection in the sight of God. "We know that when He shall appear, we shall be like to Him, because we shall see Him as He is, and every one that hath this hope in him sanctifieth Himself, as He also is holy" (1 St. John iii. 2).

What higher task can we have, my dear brethren, than to be imitators of this great Lord, who condescended to come down from His throne of glory to set us an example. He is the object of the wonder and admiration of all the angels of God. He was the pattern of all the saints in heaven, and it was by being like unto Him that they obtained the surpassing glory which they enjoy.

But, above all things, He is the special object of our love. In the Incarnation the eternal God willed to show the infinite love which He has for His creatures. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee" (Jer. xxxi. 3). This infinite and everlasting love was most conspicuously displayed in His coming down to be the Saviour of His creatures; "for God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (St. John iii. 16). As it is in the Incarnation that He has most displayed His love for men, so in the Incarnation He specially calls upon us to give Him our hearts, and to make the best return we can for the infinite love which He has shown to us.

Oh, my dear brethren, would that we could say with the apostle: "I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor might, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 38).

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXVII.

Christ our Lord.

"See that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount" (Heb. viii. 5).

When God commanded Moses to make ornaments for the house of God, He gave him, at the same time, a pattern which was to be imitated in all things. He was not to make things according to his own fancy, and after his own ideas of what was beautiful, but was strictly to conform his work to the model placed before him. In the inner temple of our souls, my dear brethren, it is still more necessary to imitate exactly the example set before us, and "to be made conformable to the image" of the Son of God. St. Peter says: "Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow His steps: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, did not revile: when He suffered, He threatened not: but delivered Himself to him that judged Him unjustly" (1 St. Peter ii. 21). Our religion consists in following in His footsteps, and making ourselves like to Him in all things. The Catechism, therefore, after dwelling on the Incarnation of our Lord, and fully explaining how His two natures —the Divine and the human nature—are united in one Divine Person, goes on to the mysteries of His life and death.

But first it speaks of Him as our Redeemer: "Why was God the Son made man? God the Son was made man to redeem us from sin and hell, and to teach us the way to heaven." By the disobedience of our first parents, Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, the human race fell away from God and from the state of justice in which it had been created. By this great catastrophe all

men lost the favour of God, and the supernatural end of their creation, and were involved in original sin. One only of the descendants of Adam—the Blessed Mother of God—has escaped from this original curse. She, too, by nature, had inherited it, but, by a special favour of God, through the merits of her Son, she was preserved in her conception from the stain of her race. The Catechism says: "All mankind have contracted the guilt and stain of original sin except the Blessed Virgin, who, through the merits of her Divine Son, was conceived without the least guilt or stain of original sin."

"Original sin," the Catechism tells us, "is that guilt and stain of sin which we inherit from Adam, who was the origin and head of all mankind." With this guilt and stain came a darkness and corruption, and a disposition for evil, which carried men farther and farther away from God, "according to the desires of their heart." "All we, like sheep, have gone astray, everyone hath turned aside into his own way" (Is. liii. 6). The Psalmist says: "The Lord hath looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there be any that understand and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all become unprofitable together, there is none that doth good—no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre, with their tongues they acted deceitfully; the poison of asps is under their lips. Destruction and unhappiness in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes" (Ps. xiii. 2). This, my dear brethren, is only too just a picture of the state of the children of men, and it is from this state that the Son of God came to redeem them.

To make atonement for their original offence, and to "redeem," or buy back, those who had transgressed, nothing less than the act of God Incarnate seemed suitable, and, therefore, God the Son, "for us men and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man. He was crucified also for us, suffered under Pontius Pilate, and was buried" *(Nicene Creed)*. He took upon Himself the burden of our sins and sorrows:

"Surely He hath borne our infirmities, and carried our sorrows; and we have thought Him, as it were, a leper, and as one struck by God and afflicted. But He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed" (Is. liii. 4).

As God, everything that He did had an infinite value. He was always "heard for His reverence," and could make no supplication in vain—but it was not by a little thing that He willed to redeem men. He was not contented without shedding the last drop of blood for us upon the cross, and He willed that this, His Precious Blood, should be the price of our redemption. "Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver from your vain conversation of the tradition of your fathers, but with the Precious Blood of Christ, as of a lamb unspotted and undefiled, foreknown, indeed, before the foundation of the world, but manifest in the last times for you" (1 St. Peter i. 18).

The Precious Blood was to be the price of our redemption, and, at the same time, the copious source of every spiritual blessing and good thing. All the graces and virtues of the saints sprung forth from "the Saviour's fountains," by which alone the barren and sterile heart of man could be fertilized; and we, too, must bring forth fruit from this same Divine source, since "of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace" (St. John i. 16).

Our Lord has been pleased to be known amongst men by two names, each of which has a deep meaning. The Catechism says: "The Holy Name of Jesus means Saviour," and "The Name Christ means anointed." Our Lord delighted to be called Jesus; it was the name which best expressed that love for men which brought Him down from heaven. It was the name of suffering, which was given to Him on earth when He first shed His Blood at the Circumcision, and which was written as His title on the cross, when He poured forth the last of it in His Passion. It was the name that best expressed all that He had done for His people and for the salvation of men—the name which told most of His patience and long-suf-

fering, of the perseverance and labour with which He sought after the sheep that were lost. "Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His Name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (St. Luke i. 31).

A special devotion and respect should always be shown to this Holy Name. It should never be pronounced but with love and reverence, and when It is heard every head should bow. Catholics should never forget the words of the apostle, "In the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in heaven, or on earth, and under the earth, and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Philip ii. 10). One of the first lessons which children should learn is that of reverence to the Holy Name; they should begin life with it, as they hope to have it for their protection and comfort in the hour of death. The name of Christ signifies "anointed." It is the name which He assumed to show the office which He had come on earth to perform. In His human nature He was to be the King, Priest and Prophet of His people, and as such He was anointed, not with oil, as the kings of earth had been anointed, but with the plenitude of grace and of power: "God anointed Him with the Holy Ghost and with power" (Acts x. 38), "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally; and you are filled in Him, who is the head of all principality and power" (Colos. ii. 9).

He was anointed as Supreme Lord and Supreme Head of the Church, "For He must reign until He hath put all His enemies under His feet." He was anointed as the great High Priest of the human race, "always living to make intercession for us." "For it was fitting that we should have such a High Priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; who needeth not daily, as other priests, to

offer sacrifices first for his own sins and then for those of the people, for this He did once in offering Himself" (Heb. vii. 25).

Our Blessed Lord is our model, as Man, and as High Priest, and as Saviour: we must study Him in His hidden life at Nazareth, as well as in His public ministry, and during His Passion; and, therefore, the Church puts the different scenes of His life constantly before us: "See thou make all things according to the pattern which was shown thee on the mount." If we would copy a model, we are not satisfied with a passing glance or a general view; we take it to pieces, if we may say so, by examining each part by itself, and finding out what is to be learned in each detail. So with our Lord's life: there is not an incident or word from which we may not draw instruction, "for what things soever were written, were written for our learning, that through patience and the comfort of the Scriptures we might have hope" (Rom. xv. 4).

One of the principal ways in which the Catholic Church puts the life of our Lord before her children is by the devotion of the Rosary. This form of prayer is greatly encouraged by the Church for many reasons. It is suitable to all classes of men—clergy and laity, rich and poor—and is in a special way adapted to the use of the unlearned, so that the beads may be called the prayer-book of those who cannot read. It is a devotion, moreover, which is available on many occasions when other forms of prayer cannot be used, and one which leads us to piety by the example and assistance of the Blessed Mother of God. I have only here to consider the course of meditations on the life and death of our Lord which the Rosary puts before us. These meditations are the essential part of the devotion; it is not a mere collection of "Our Fathers" and "Hail Marys," but a well-arranged contemplation of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Any one who is accustomed to use the Rosary in the proper way, cannot fail to be well instructed in all the principal parts of our Saviour's life on earth. The Rosary is divided into fifteen "mysteries," or

scenes in the life of our Lord; five of which are commonly the devotion for each day.

The five "joyful mysteries" are the Annunciation, the Visitation, the Nativity, the Presentation, the Finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple. These are said on Mondays and Thursdays, and on the Sundays from the beginning of Advent till the beginning of Lent.

The "five sorrowful mysteries" are the Agony in the Garden, the Scourging at the Pillar, the Crowning with Thorns, the Carrying of the Cross, and the Crucifixion. These are said on Tuesdays and Fridays, and on the Sundays from Septuagesima Sunday till Easter.

The "five glorious mysteries" are the Resurrection, the Ascension, the Descent of the Holy Ghost, the Assumption, and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. These are said on Wednesdays and Saturdays, and on the Sundays from Easter till Advent. It is plain that any one who says the Rosary regularly goes through the whole course of our Lord's life twice in each week, independently of the Sundays. To make this meditation properly, you should think over the whole scene of the mystery, as it is described to us in the Gospel, and try to enter into the feelings which it is calculated to excite. You should then say the "Our Father" and the "Ten Hail Marys," with special reference to the mystery, asking the graces which the scene appears to suggest.

It is true that people cannot always find time to do this at any length or very fully; but still, if you are familiar with the history of our Lord's life, you cannot well fail to have at least some good thoughts appropriate to the scene on which you are dwelling. It is necessary, however, to be well instructed in the history, and to know accurately the incidents of our Lord's life, or else it is impossible to make a meditation on them. The Apostles' Creed gives us a very short summary of our Lord's life, and there seems no better way of illustrating it than by dwelling on some at least of the mysteries of the Rosary.

The third article of the Creed is, "Who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary." The mystery of the Annunciation places the scene of the Incar-

nation before our eyes. The angel Gabriel descends as a messenger from the Most High God to a lowly virgin in the poor house of Nazareth, and enters with a greeting unheard of amongst men. "And the angel, being come in, said unto her, Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women. Who, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought within herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son: and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David His father: and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. And Mary said, How shall this be done, because I know not man? And the angel, answering, said to her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And, therefore, also, the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month with her that is called barren, because no word shall be impossible with God. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word" (St. Luke i. 28).

We have here before us an unbounded field for contemplation. We raise our eyes to the Eternal Father, whose messenger the archangel is. "Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name." We think of the unfathomable depths of His condescension in thus deigning to ally Himself with our fallen race. We address ourselves to the Blessed Mother of God in the words of the archangel: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou amongst women." "What manner of salutation" is this? How unlike the words of God's angels to mortal men! How great was the angel who was sent down upon earth, and how reverent and tender were His words to this lowly Virgin! St.

Bernard says: "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God. I opine that this angel is not one of those lesser ones who are often sent to earth with messages upon one occasion and another. This may be well understood from his name, which signifieth 'the strong man of God,' and because it is especially said that he was sent not by some spirit haply more excellent than he, but by God Himself. . . Christ is called, and absolutely is, 'the power of God,' . . . but the angel is called 'the strong man of God,' either because this title was his right as the herald of the power of God, or because it was his mission to comfort the Virgin, naturally fearful, simple and shame-faced, lest she should be beside herself with terror at the newness of the miracle, which office he discharged when he said: 'fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God'" *(Breviary Lesson: Marquis of Bute's translation)*.

"And behold thy cousin Elizabeth, she also hath conceived a son in her old age." Does it not seem as if this wonder was worked chiefly as the most reverent way of comforting and encouraging her who was to be Mother of God?

We cannot go over this scene in spirit without longing to join with the mighty Archangel in acknowledging the new and unheard of title to reverence bestowed upon the creature whom the Creator has called to such a sublime dignity.

But listen to the words of Mary, and learn how to receive the favours of God: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done unto me according to thy word." She is chosen to be the Mother of God, but she is none the less His handmaid: she is not the less dust and ashes in His sight, and the more His goodness exalts her, the more she humbles herself before Him.

The great thought of this mystery is to adore and welcome the Lord who became incarnate, and "did not abhor the Virgin's womb."

"Domus pudici pectoris,
Templum repentè fit Dei."

"The home of a pure heart in a moment is made the

temple of God." We say, again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus;" and we should try each time to make these words express more fervently the love and gratitude, the admiration and reverence which we have for our Lord in the mystery of His Incarnation.

Each time we conclude our address with a prayer, and beg our Lady to "pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death." We have placed before us the benefits of redemption. The Lord became incarnate because of our miseries, and to bestow great blessings upon men: as we think of these we have not only to be grateful for them, but to ask for help, that we may be worthy of them. Jesus gave these blessings through Mary, and we may well ask her prayers to enable us to use them well, at the present moment, and at the hour of death.

Each "decade" of the Rosary finishes with the *Gloria Patri*, as we are to give glory to God at the end of all our petitions. Everything in the order of nature and of grace is intended, as its last end and aim, to give glory to the Blessed Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Let us, then, give glory for the mystery of the Annunciation. Think of the countless souls who have been redeemed to God by our Lord's Incarnation, and are now praising and glorifying His goodness; think of all the graces that are distributed amongst men for the sake of this God incarnate, and especially of the many blessings which have come to you through it, and join heartily in the universal song of glorification which all creatures send up to the Eternal Trinity.

The second joyful mystery is the Visitation, when the Blessed Virgin Mary went to visit her cousin, St. Elizabeth. This feast is kept by the Church on July 2. Hear the Scripture account of the mystery: "And the angel departed from her, and Mary rising up in those days, went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda. And she entered into the house of Zachary and saluted Elizabeth. And it came to pass that when Elizabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the infant leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and she cried out with a loud voice and said,

Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? For, behold, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in my ears, the infant in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord. And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid. For, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath showed might in His arm; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things, and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy, as He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and his seed for ever. And Mary abode with her about three months, and she returned to her own house" (St. Luke i. 38).

The Lord has come upon earth, and grace goes forth from Him. He will not wait till the appointed time of His birth has arrived. No sooner has the angel departed from her, and God has become incarnate in her womb, than Mary goes forth on her mission, and her voice is the chosen means by which sanctifying grace is conveyed to St. John the Baptist even in his mother's womb.

St. John Chrysostom says: "As soon as our Redeemer was come among us, He went with haste, while as yet He was in His Mother's womb, to visit His friend John. And John in the one womb, becoming conscious of Jesus in the other womb, dashed himself impatiently against the narrow walls of his natural prison, as though crying out, 'I see the very Lord who has given nature her bounds, and I will not wait for the due season of my birth. There is no need for me to linger here till nine months are ended, for He that is eternal is with me. I will break

out of my dark cell. I will proclaim my full knowledge of many wonders. I am the sign; I will show that Christ is here. I am the trumpet; let me peal forth the news that the Son of God is come in the flesh' . . . He saith, as it were, 'Behold, the Deliverer cometh, and am I to remain still bound to abide here? The word cometh that He may set right all things, and am I still to tarry in prison? I will go forth. I will run before Him and cry aloud to all men, Behold, the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sins of the world'" *(Brev. Lesson. Fest. Visit.)*

St. Ambrose, again, says: "We must here consider the greater cometh unto the lesser, Mary unto Elizabeth, Christ to John. . . . Elizabeth was the first to hear the voice of Mary's salutation, but John was the first to receive grace. She heard naturally, but he leaped mystically. She hailed the coming of Mary, he that of the Lord. Mary and Elizabeth spake words full of grace, but Jesus and John worked, and commenced their mystery of godliness from their mothers' beginnings, and so by twin miracles the mothers prophesied from the spirit of their unborn offspring. The babe leaped, and the mother was filled with the Holy Ghost. The mother was not filled before the son, but when the son was filled with the Holy Ghost he filled his mother also" (*Brev. Lesson*).

Let us now look at a few of the points of consideration which the mystery suggests, that we may dwell on them as we recite the prayers belonging to it. The moment the Holy Spirit had overshadowed her, and the Son of God had become incarnate in her womb, the Blessed Virgin Mary set forth on a mission of charity. She could not rest till she had carried His grace to others, and had begun that work for which He came on earth. "The charity of Christ presseth us" (2 Cor. v. 14). He who has received Christ into his heart ought to be full of zeal to spread the kingdom of God. "Our Father, Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done." The Spirit of God cannot be selfish or idle within us.

Mary sets forth on a long journey to comfort her cousin, and how is she received? "Blessed art thou

amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is it to me that the Mother of my Lord should come to me?" How perfectly the words of Elizabeth accord with those of the angel! By the instinct of the Holy Spirit, she at once recognized the surpassing dignity which had been bestowed on Mary. St. Elizabeth was advanced in years, and by position entitled to reverence, but the supreme favour of God conferred upon Mary rank above all other creatures, and gave her a right to deference and homage. The Catholic Church joins heartily in this homage, and is never tired of repeating her words: "Blessed art thou amongst women."

And how does Mary receive this? She does not disclaim it or wonder at it; she knows too well how great is the dignity with which she is invested. "Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." How wonderful is the prophecy of this unknown maiden, of whom the world thought so little! And how wonderfully has it been fulfilled! Every age has called her blessed, in every language have her praises been uttered and her dignity extolled! "All generations shall call me blessed!" After eighteen centuries, in the Church of God, every tongue throughout the world still calls her blessed.

"He that is mighty has done great things for me, and holy is His Name." In all the dignity given to her, and the honours heaped upon her, she sees but one thing—the greatness and goodness of that God from whom it all proceeds. She accepts the homage paid to her only to offer it up to Him whose handmaid she is. When a trifling distinction is bestowed on us, we exalt ourselves and delight in the honour due to us; but Mary, when she has received the highest of all honours, magnifies God, and pours out, as incense before Him, all the homage which she has received: "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour."

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXVIII.

Hear the Church.

BY THE VERY REV. G. AKERS.

"He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me (St. Luke x. 16).

We are, all of us, well aware that God speaks to us through His Church, and that He has given her authority to teach all nations. Moreover, to St. Peter, as the head of the Church, our Lord said, "Feed my sheep"—that is to say, not only instruct them and nourish them with the heavenly food of sacramental grace, but govern them. For it is the Father and the Master who feeds and who teaches, and with these offices that of ruling is inseparably connected. The Church has not only to feed, as supplying the nourishment of our souls, but to *dispense* the food according to her judgment of the needs and deserts of her children; not only to teach, as one man might impart knowledge to another, but to see that her teaching is respected, and carried out in the practice of the faithful. We read that the people "were in admiration at" our Lord's "doctrine, for He was teaching them as one having power, and not as their Scribes and Pharisees" (Matt. vii. 29). But the fulness of this power Christ handed on to the apostles, when He said to them, "As the Father hath sent me, I also send you" (Mark i. 22).

Thus, then, the Church has power to impose her precepts upon men, in the name and with the authority of God Himself. But it may be said that she can only impose, as binding on the conscience, the precepts which God had already taught His people. But this would be to limit the authority which Christ has given her. It is true that she can teach no new truth, nor alter the truth

which had been taught. This does not limit her power, but only shows her to be clothed with the unchangeableness of God. Our Lord has said to her: "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (Matt. xxviii. 20). But she can declare to men the extent of the truth, and exhibit new aspects of it, as the needs of men or the perversity of heresies may require. The truth is ever ancient, and ever new. Our Lord compares the Scribe instructed in the kingdom of heaven—that is, the Church—to "a man that is a householder, who bringeth forth out of his treasure new things and old" (Matt. xiii. 52).

"Faith is dead without works," as St. James tells us. It is a useless faith which is not shown in a holy life. So, when God had revealed Himself in a new and wonderful manner to the Israelites, He gave them commandments. And God Incarnate, while preaching the Gospel, says: "A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another" (John xiii. 34). So, therefore, in the full power which He communicates to His Church, authority to impose precepts is included in authority to teach.

"He that heareth you, heareth me." The hearing here spoken of is the hearing of obedience, not merely listening, even respectful listening, to the teaching of Christ's ministers. The Athenian students of old listened with respect to the great philosophers whose pupils they were, but they did not hesitate to alter their teaching when they became masters themselves, and to found new schools of philosophy. It cannot stand thus between the Church and her children. She always occupies the chair of authority, and they are always bound to listen to her voice. What she teaches or commands cannot be altered at their pleasure, but their judgment must submit itself to her, and mould itself according to her voice. And when we remember that that voice is God's voice, how full and glad ought our submission to be? "The hands are the hands of Esau," that is, human, and through human agency, but "the voice is the voice of Jacob" (Gen. xxvii. 22), that is, of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate.

We are living in a world which, in spite of calling itself nominally Christian, has its own laws and maxims. The State can hardly be called even nominally Christian. Even in Catholic countries laws are made, and power is wielded, not only in contemptuous indifference to the Church, but in direct and bitter opposition to her. Under our own eyes, and in our own time, the rancour of that opposition is growing more intense. In Catholic France and Catholic Belgium, as well as in Protestant Prussia, the Church is no longer left free to educate her own children in the Christian religion. Nay, even the priest in the pulpit has suffered punishment for faithfully proclaiming the Church's law, and the duty of the faithful. Persecution for Christ's sake is not a matter of history, or an occurrence among pagan tribes in Asia, Africa, or America. It is impressed in characters deep and clear on the consciences of all thoughtful men, that the laws of the world and the law of Christ are at variance with one another.

And this is not to be wondered at, for the object of the Church's laws, and the object of those of the State, are not the same. Nay, more, they are as different as time and eternity. The object of the Church is to teach her children to live holy and penitential lives, such as may fit them to die a good death, and enjoy the sight of God in heaven. This world and its concerns she knows to be transitory, and she trains her children to look on the present life as a pilgrimage through a strange country, in which the pilgrim is to take heed not to attach himself to the attractions of the land he is passing through, lest he should forget his own home, and never reach it.

The State, on the other hand, seeks only to make good citizens, and to strengthen and enrich itself and its members. It would accumulate wealth and power, and encourages its citizens to do so for its benefit. It knows nothing of the conscience, and concerns itself only with the outward acts of men. It is impatient of any authority existing side by side with its own, and especially resents the claims of the Church over the consciences of her children. It is, of course, of the non-Christian State that I

am speaking. But in our own day it would be difficult to find any State that was really Christian. Peoples may be so, but their government, not. Of course, a Christian State would have no difficulty in allowing the Church's authority, which would not clash with its own, but rather support it, their provinces being very distinct from one another; but the influence of the Church decided by promoting those social virtues which are beneficial to the State.

But it is not only in State laws that this variance exists and is felt. What we call "society" has its unwritten laws and customs, which more dangerously, because more constantly, minutely, and insidiously, oppose the law of Christ and His Church. And this opposition lies at their very roots, because the law of Christ teaches humility, obedience, self-denial, forgetfulness of self, and charity to others; while the laws which prevail in the world teach men pride and ambition, independence of authority, misnamed liberty, selfishness, and self-indulgence. The children of the world are faithful enough to these laws, and no wonder, for they are dictated by human passions. But the law of Christ, and therefore the laws of His Church, are directed to the conquest of the passions, to a crucified life, and a contempt for the passing things of this world. And as the Catholic is not taken out of the world, he is living, as it were, in a nation of aliens, and he can hardly remain faithful to the Divine precepts which he professes to obey without attracting notice for his singularity, and, perhaps, bringing upon himself scorn or ridicule. "What need," they will say, "to be so particular about going to Mass? Why keep festivals which are not known in the world's calendar? Why be so particular as to what food you eat on a Friday? Why should you confess your sins to a fellow-creature?" Many such scornful taunts the Catholic is exposed to who endeavours to be faithful to the law of the Church, and it is not contempt alone, or ridicule, that he may expect. Even now—though things are so much better than they were—to be a Catholic exposes the labourer to remain without hire and the servant-girl to be without a place. A tradesman known to be a Catholic

loses custom, and even the children of our poor in the workhouses are derided if they remain faithful to their religion. Alas! is it not the fact that this inevitable contact with the world and its unchristian laws and traditions is a constant siege laid to the loyalty of the faithful Catholic? It meets us everywhere. Along the whole line of the Church's army the attack is made—often with specious pretexts, which might easily deceive the unwary. Those who themselves profess to have cast away all prejudice against Catholics challenge us to meet them in the same spirit. "Let us live together and work together," they will say, "as brethren, and forget our differences. Our schools shall be 'undenominational;' and then, surely, you cannot object to send your children to them. Our marriage rite shall be a civil contract; we will no longer force you to enter a Protestant temple for it, and to *this* you can surely not object. We will give our daughters in marriage to your sons; your daughters shall be given to our sons. If they have children, half shall be educated in your faith, half in ours; or they shall be left to choose their own religion after they have grown up." They cannot, or they will not, understand that there can be no compact between truth and error; that truth itself ceases to be truth when it is treated as an opinion, to be set aside or toned down to meet the prejudices of others, and that the prohibition of the Church stands between us and any such compacts. Sometimes disloyal Catholics will be found who are led away by these prevarications; and these will be held up to us as fine examples of liberality, while the faithful Catholic will be condemned as "bigoted" or "Ultramontane." It is hard to bear the reiterated assaults of alternate flattery and abuse without flinching—harder, perhaps, in some ways than to endure actual persecution. But it is the trial which God in His Providence has been pleased to appoint us, and we must meet it courageously, having always as our watchword loyalty to the Church. The opposition of the world ought to be to the good soldier of Jesus Christ as a bracing wind, chilling, perhaps, yet wholesome in its effects. But, unhappily, this opposition is not without its effect

on the lives of Catholics. How few are there who have not felt the temptation to relax some of their loyalty—to conceal, if not to betray, their religion—and how much fewer who have not, at least sometimes and in some measure, yielded to that temptation! And those who have done so become snares to their brethren. If one Catholic thinks he may eat flesh with impunity on a Friday, why may not another? If one thinks lightly of neglecting his Easter Communion, will not others be quick to follow his baneful example? And thus it comes to pass that, except among a faithful few, there is a spiritual torpor and a general disposition to make compromise with God's enemy—the world. Hence is spiritually fulfilled what St. Paul says, "Therefore are there many infirm and weak among you, and many sleep" (1 Cor. xi. 30). It may seem a little thing not to hear the Church. No worldly harm—perhaps worldly advantage—follows upon it. But look at the spiritual condition of such an one! Is he not infirm for every good purpose—weak against the assaults of temptation—sleeping when the citadel of the soul is betrayed into the enemy's hand? A dutiful obedience to the laws of the Church, with use of her sacraments, would have made him strong and watchful; but he thought little of these things, and, lo! his strength has become weakness, and he is led away captive in the day of battle. In despising the Church, he has despised her Spouse and His Lord. "You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions. I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared" (Prov. i. 26). He has despised the Church, and God has despised him.

Let us, then, remember who it is who has said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon" (Matt. vi. 24). No man can serve two masters. But if these two masters are absolutely opposed to one another, so that what one seeks to establish the other is pulling down, how evidently disastrous is the attempt! Christ, our true Master, through our Mother the Church, seeks to build up in us a heavenly discipline, and to fashion us "after

His likeness." The world, on the other hand, hates discipline, and the children of the world rise up in revolt against it. The image of Christ in the soul is loathsome to it, and it purposes to set up in its place the "abomination of desolation."

We have to take our parts, and remembering that the precepts of the Church are intended as a military discipline to train us in the battle she is waging against the world, and a mark by which her children may be known, to observe them loyally, with whole heart, and without compromise. St. James says: "The friendship of this world is an enemy of God" (James iv. 4). And St. Paul: "Be not conformed to this world" (Rom. xii. 2). If it involve sacrifice, loss of gain, or loss of good opinion, we can cheerfully face this for a Master who for our sake was "despised, and the most abject of Men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with infirmity" (Is. liii. 3). For their loyalty to the Church, under far greater difficulties than we have to encounter, our Catholic forefathers in this land suffered loss of goods, prison and death. And they were far more scrupulously faithful than many who call themselves good Catholics in our day, surrounded with priests and churches and fellow-Catholics, and every opportunity, and all liberty of practising their religion.

It might be thought, perhaps, that the precepts of the Church are many and hard to practice. And yet you well know that it is not so. Few in number, and easy indeed in their obligations, there is no excuse for neglecting them. You learnt them when you were children in your Catechism, and as children you kept them perhaps better than you do now. They reminded you of another world, to which you are hastening, and for which you must prepare. They kept before you the duty of self-denial, and yet so gently that its lessons could never be harsh or irksome to you. They taught you to remember at once the grievousness of sin and the mercifulness of the Sacred Heart in its light and easy remedy. You can find no excuse for their neglect in their severity or in your own infirmity, and you cannot challenge the

authority of the Church to impose them. "Hear," then, "the instruction of your Father, and forsake not the law of thy Mother, that grace may be added to thy head, and a chain of gold to thy neck" (Prov. i. 8, 9).

Consider, moreover, the end for which these Commandments have been given us. It is the end for which Christ our Lord came down from heaven, namely, to open to us the gate of heaven, and to guide our steps thither. There is, and can be, no other object in such ordinances but to show us the right way to serve God, and to help us in that service. Without such law, we should be, as it were, launched without rudder or compass upon a pathless sea, to find our own way unguided through dangers great and uncertain, to a distant port. What chance of reaching it, what hope of escaping shipwreck should we have? Moreover, in our case there is but one port. There is no other friendly haven which we might reach; if we do not in this life find the straight course to heaven, there is no hope left for us. As the end is one, so must also the road be. We cannot fashion for ourselves rules of conduct to guide us aright. It would be as if one were to dictate new laws to the mathematician, or as if a child should presume to teach his teacher. It is, therefore, in mercy and compassion that God has given us the guidance of the Church; and he is worse than a madman who should rise up against her authority and profess himself able to dispense with her help. If any fall into this error it must be from pure want of reflection. But let them consider before it be too late to how certain a shipwreck their rash revolt is leading them. "The Commandment," says St. Paul, "is holy, and just, and good" (Rom. vii. 12). And David declares, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light to my paths."

Consider, once more, the fruit of faithful observance of the Commandments. As I have said before, the Commandments of God are given for our benefit. It is not for any benefit to God, for He is in no wise dependent on His creatures, and He would lose none of His glory, His excellence, or His perfections, if they were to cease

to exist. But man being created, and created an intelligent being, it becomes his duty to give glory to his Creator. And God, in His great love of man, has so ordered it, that to glorify God becomes man's chief, or, indeed, only true, happiness. His life is so ordered that it can only run sweetly and smoothly when in accordance with God's sacred will. To disobey the Commandments of God and His Church, is to strike a jarring discord into his own life, which must needs cause him pain and trouble. When we consciously disobey, the voice of our conscience within us reproves us, and continues to reprove until by repentance we have become reconciled to God. There is no greater misery than a troubled, or, as it is often called, a bad, conscience. The conscience itself, indeed, is not bad. Rather it is the witness of God within us. But it testifies to something bad in our soul, and it ceases not to cry out within us until that evil thing has been removed.

God is the Author of Order. In the beginning of the inspired narrative, we behold Him bringing order out of the shapelessness of chaos. And wherever His voice is heard and obeyed, we behold beauty and order, as in that first creation, developed, and growing on to perfection. If the sense of disorder in our souls, produced by disobedience, is bitter, there is, on the other hand, nothing so sweet as the peace experienced by the soul which is in true subjection to His holy will. Such obedience, it is true, does not shelter us from any of those trials and crosses to which all men are exposed; but these can never avail to ruffle that true peace which reigns within. The trials of this life are like the violent winds which stir the face of the deep, and excite mighty tempests; but the worst tempest can only stir the surface, and a few fathoms below reigns a perpetual and unruffled calm. So is it with the soul which trusts in God and keeps His Commandments.

Moreover, it shares something of the life of the Blessed who see God. The joy of heaven results from the perpetual union of the wills of those happy souls with the Will of God. If we could imagine, for a moment, a re-

sistance of their will to His, their happiness would at once be over. By one thought of proud disobedience Satan fell, and from the chief of angels became a devil.

When the will is united to God, He is able to dwell, and He delights to manifest Himself and pour forth His favours. By conforming to His Will, the soul is established more firmly in His likeness, and is able to see Him more clearly mirrored in herself. "They shall have great peace who love Thy law."

What we want is a little more confidence, and a little more generosity. If, instead of asking, "Why am I obliged to do this, or not to do that?" we trusted our Mother the Church, as we know that we may and should —if, instead of dwelling on the effort or the sacrifice required, petty as they are, we were to recall the generosity of God towards us, and deal with Him in like manner, we should find our difficulties disappear, and should be astonished that we ever found anything hard and displeasing which God requires at our hands. It is because we will not even give a fair trial to a life of obedience, that it seems so hard to us. The children of the world should put us to shame. Who would expect to succeed in an enterprise which he began without confidence, and for the sake of which he feared to incur the slightest sacrifice? Consider the immense sacrifices, and the long labours, which men are ready to expend in order to attain riches, or power, or any other object of worldly ambition, and you will blush to think of the cold and grudging way in which you set yourselves to keep those precepts, the end of which is eternal life.

If you think of the saints, to whom the least word of the Church was sacred and precious, of what in various ways they endured, and rejoiced to endure, in this life, and then of their serene happiness in the midst of these troubles, the ecstasies of joy in which they were often wrapt, and, above all, the earnest and solid words with which they so often reiterated that there was no joy and no peace such as the joy and peace experienced by the faithful servant of God, your courage will surely be stirred up to imitate them, and, with renewed generosity of purpose,

you will lament your former backslidings, and give yourself up to observe the law of your Mother the Church, sure that "all her ways are pleasantness, and all her paths peace."

In the following discourses I hope to dwell more particularly on the principal of these Commandments, especially the duty of hearing Mass, of approaching the Sacraments, and of fasting and abstinence at the proper times. But now I want you to see how these, and the habits naturally connected with them, alter the whole colour of a man's life. From being purposeless, they give it the colour of a serious and earnest purpose; from being shut in by the walls of time, they set it in relation with eternity; from being fixed on the present, they direct it to a future life. "For they that say these things, do signify that they seek a country" (Heb. xi. 14). And that country is their true home. Obedience to the precepts of the Church trains them in the customs of their own country. In heaven God is continually worshipped. We are taught, therefore, to return with joy to the Church's solemn act of worship here below. None can enter heaven or see God but the clean of heart—that is, those who are purified from every stain. We are, therefore, bidden frequently to examine our consciences and purify them in the Sacrament of Penance. In heaven God alone fills the blessed with all sweetness. We are, therefore, invited to feast our souls on His Precious Body and Blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. And, in like manner, as God alone suffices to His saints, we are commanded to abstain from pleasant food, and to diminish its quantity, to show that we do not depend on that, and that we care rather for the nourishment of our souls than of our bodies.

And, moreover, the diligent observance of the Church's commandments brings discipline and order into our lives. You must all have had the opportunity of observing the life of an aimless, undisciplined man. He is unsettled, changeable, unbalanced. At one time indolent and desponding, he lets his days pass by in inactivity. At another, full of feverish excitement, he throws himself

into some pursuit which catches his fancy, but which he will never attain, because he cannot persevere, and because the headlong and inconsiderate zeal with which he undertakes it is as ill-balanced and wasteful as his previous indolence. And you can contrast this with the patient and well-ordered perseverance of others, who, without haste, but with steady diligence, pursue one end, which they have chosen with deliberation, and which, humanly speaking, they are sure to attain to. And you can see how, in this well-disciplined life, all that is most noble and most robust in man's nature is brought out, whereas in the other the finest qualities are wasted and lost. The one is represented by the steam restrained and directed by machinery to work a mighty engine, the other that same steam exposed in an open vessel to waste itself fruitlessly in the air.

But when the aim is God's glory and our own salvation, and the discipline is that imposed by our Mother the Church in God's name, how are all the capabilities of our nature elevated and ennobled! They are raised above nature, for the life of the Church is supernatural, and, if faithfully observed with all that they lead to, it would avail to make us saints, as it has made others.

Let us, then, have a profound reverence for the voice of the Church, and let her least word be, indeed, a law to us. Emancipating ourselves from the customs of the world which weaken all our spiritual powers, and at last kill them, let us rejoice that God has provided for us a sure voice to guide us in the way of life, saying to us: "This is the way: walk ye in it, and go not aside, neither to the right hand, nor to the left" (Is. xxx. 21).

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXIX.

The Catholic's Sunday.

BY THE VERY REV. G. AKERS.

"Offer to God the sacrifice of praise, and pay thy vows to the Most High" (Ps. xlix. 14).

The first and principal Commandment of the Church is "To keep the Sundays and Holidays of Obligation holy, by hearing Mass and resting from servile works."

It is not my purpose, in this discourse, my dear brethren, to explain to you the doctrine of the Holy Mass—that has often been done, and will be often done again. Taking this as well known to you, I would rather proceed to impress upon you the obligation which the Church lays upon the faithful of assisting devoutly at that Holy Sacrifice on certain appointed days, and particularly on Sundays.

Every Christian knows well, and would never think of denying, that he is placed in this world to serve God. We cannot conceive of a God, who has created us, and who preserves us, without recognizing at once our duty to worship Him. The multitude of careless and bad Christians of every sect would never deny this. They could only plead as an excuse that they preferred to serve Him at their own time and in their own way, and so try to hide the fact that they were not serving Him at all. But, bad Catholics cannot plead this excuse, for they know well enough that God has not left to them to decide how and when they should worship Him, but that He has given them laws to direct and dispose that service, as certainly as He gave them to the Israelites through Moses. Indeed, reason will tell us, both from what we know of God, and from what we know of ourselves, that it cannot be left to the creature to determine how he

shall worship his Creator. We know of God that He is a God of order, "mightily and sweetly ordering all things" (Wisdom viii. 1). The inanimate creation worships Him by preserving the order in which it was made—the stars in their courses, and the plant in its growth, and blossom, and fruit. But to man, whom He has endowed with understanding and free will, God makes no such necessity, but, by a command laid upon him, leaves it to his free and glad obedience to pay Him a nobler service. At the creation, as we read in Genesis, God set apart the seventh day as a holy day, in honour of His rest from creation. "He blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work" (Gen. ii. 3). He sanctified it not for Himself, but for man, for time is created for man, and henceforth man was to keep that day holy to Him. And this precept He reimposes on the Israelites through Moses, making it one of the ten Commandments given from Mount Sinai, and written on the tables of testimony. Besides this Sabbath day, there were other great feasts imposed on Israel, as the Feast of Pentecost, the Feast of Tabernacles, and, greatest of all, the Pasch, commemorating the deliverance from Egypt, and foreshadowing our redemption through Jesus Christ, the Lamb without spot. For all these holy days and seasons a minute ritual was appointed, and each, above all, was celebrated by a solemn Sacrifice. From all time, in short, not only has God claimed man's worship, but He has imposed the time and manner of it. On man's part, in like manner, it was necessary that he should be taught how to worship, since he neither knows God, nor how to approach Him, except as God may please to reveal Himself to him. What is left to ourselves to do, is not done, or, at least, not well done, unless we have fixed time and manner for it. Our ordinary duties in life we have to learn, and how much more this our greatest duty! It cannot be left to man to worship as he will.

God is unchangeable, and, as up to the coming of our Lord He had imposed times of worship, it was to be expected that He would still do so to the Christian Church. The manner of appointing was different, but

the law was the same. It was the Church who, in the fulness of power conveyed to her by our Lord, and with the guidance of the Holy Ghost perpetually imparted to her, appointed the holy days for her children. First of all, she transferred the weekly holy day from the Saturday, which had been kept in honour of creation, to the Sunday, in honour of our Lord's resurrection. That this was the case from the beginning, we know. How and when appointed, we know not. Whether the apostles learnt it from the voice of their Master during those forty days before His Resurrection, when He was "speaking of the kingdom of God" (Acts i. 3); or whether after Pentecost, before they dispersed themselves to preach the Gospel to every creature, we know not. But earliest and most sacred of her precepts, the Church consecrated the first day of the week for the assembling of her children to the Sacrifice of the New Law. "On the first day of the week, when the faithful were assembled to break bread" (Acts xx. 7) (*i.e.*, to assist at the Holy Mass) St. Paul preached to them at Troas. On the first day of the week, in writing to Corinth, he bade them make collection of their alms for the poor at Jerusalem (1 Cor. xvi. 2). And St. John calls it by the name by which the Church has always known it—the Lord's Day. On that day, perhaps, just after he had celebrated the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, was vouchsafed to him at Patmos the wonderful visions in which the fate of the Church and the world are revealed. "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (Apoc. i. 10).

Other feasts the Church appointed, by the same authority, and bade the faithful honour them in like manner —namely, by assembling together to assist at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. At one time he was counted excommunicate who absented Himself from the Holy Mass, at which even he was expected to communicate. But if the Church, dealing with an enervated and worldly race, ceased to require the weekly Communion as an absolute necessity, and limited this as a duty to the Paschal Communion, she has never ceased to require from the faithful the duty of assisting at the Holy Sacrifice, at least on

every Sunday and on the greater feasts. For there are other days besides Sunday which the Church requires to be kept holy. The same authority which could transfer the weekly holy day from Saturday to Sunday could, and did, impose other days besides to be specially set apart for Divine worship. The birthday of our Lord—His Manifestation to the Gentiles—His Ascension into Heaven—the Assumption of His Mother—were solemnities ever memorable among Christians. At first many more days were imposed than are now observed, and for the same reason as above was relaxation made. When the general conscience of man was impressed with the truth, that his first duty was to serve God, and his first end to prepare for eternity, it needed no great compulsion, and it cost him no great effort, to give to God generously of his time, and to find joy and consolation in the frequent recurrence of those holy days on which he should keep a feast of the Lord, and set aside for the time his worldly labours and his worldly pleasures. Even in his pagan time, blindly groping after truth, he had not lost this fragment of his primitive inheritance; and, though his worship was paid to false gods, it was duly paid, and the multitude of his festivals showed how deeply he felt the duty of Divine worship.

We have come upon days, my dear brethren, as you can too plainly see, when this, with all other duties which remind us of God and eternity, have been suffered by a luxurious and perverse generation to fall into the background, if not to disappear altogether. Men began by suffering the world to share with Christ the empire of their souls, and, as a necessary consequence, Christ is driven out altogether. In pity for the weakness of the age, the Church has very greatly restricted the number of her feast days of obligation. And yet even those few that remain, how little are they observed! There was a time when it needed not a strict law and threat of spiritual penalties to make men flock to our churches. Their own loyal devotion led them thither, and they were rather covetous of the blessings which they received there, than dreading the Divine displeasure which awaited them if

they neglected their duty. Thus it was the fervour of the faithful which caused fresh days to be added to the feasts of obligation. Their patron saint, the glories of Mary, the mystery of the Holy Eucharist, needed fresh solemnities; and it was the faithful who obtained from the Church, through her Chief Pastor, the institution of these feasts. But all this is changed. One by one, and in one land after another, feasts have been neglected, and the Church has ceased to require their observance. She has dealt with men as with sick children, who must be humoured and coaxed to receive their necessary food. It should make us blush to think of the tender indulgence of our Mother, and our waywardness, or rather frowardness, in return.

But to the Church's indulgence there is a limit; and she would not be the tender parent that she is, if she were to leave us wholly to our own devices—to suffer us to serve self and the world, without restraint, and yet to imagine that God would still count us as His servants, and that by a nominal Christianity, marked by no sacrifice, no self-denial, we might obtain the Kingdom of Heaven at last. Plainly and strictly, she has laid upon us, and always will lay, the obligation of joining in her great act of worship, at least every Sunday, and on those few great feasts which commemorate the great events and the great mysteries of our salvation. That great act of worship is the Christian Sacrifice, in which is offered to God the Death and Passion of His dear Son. In a Living Mystery, in which He Himself is present, and is Himself the Victim, Jesus Christ offers Himself, by the hands of His priest, on every Christian altar. He offers Himself to the Father, even as He offered Himself on the cross, and as He still offers Himself on the golden altar in heaven.

St. John, when heaven was opened to him, and he saw behind the veil the mysteries of the holiest place, beheld in the midst of the throne "a lamb standing, as it were, slain" (Apoc. v. 6). And, in recording this vision, he would bid us see behind the veils on our own altars that same Lamb, uniting earth and heaven, time and space, that all creatures may be made one in, and share the

benefits of, that one perfect and availing Sacrifice. By many hands, on thousands of altars, day by day, is that Sacrifice presented to God here on earth; it pervades time with a golden thread of eternity. Day by day, by tens of thousands of priests and Christian people, is that Victim consumed; yet still is He offered, "always living to make intercession for us." Strange and sad, indeed, that the people of His love are so slow, so unwilling, to present themselves before Him, and, through His Sacred Humanity, before the Blessed Trinity, to adore and return to their homes pardoned and sanctified.

But, if Jesus in the Holy Mass offers Himself to God for us, He also offers Himself to us. He is on our altars, because "His delights are to be with the children of men" (Prov. viii. 31). He is there because He desires to meet us, because His heart yearns after us. He summons us to His Court by the voice of the Church, as He summoned the shepherds to Bethlehem by the voice of an angel, and the three wise men by the light of a star. Of old time, the potentates of the East would come forth from their palaces and sit in the gates of the city, that all, even the poorest, might come into their presence, and seek justice from their oppressor, and help in their needs. Thus does Jesus stand in His Church, which is, as Jacob said, "the gate of heaven" (Gen. xxviii. 17), to receive the petitions of His people. Truly, the children of the Church, all faithful Catholics, are favoured of God, and rightly does St. Peter call them "a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a holy nation, a purchased people" (1 Peter ii. 9).

Let us remember, however, that if we are so privileged in being admitted to join in a worship which is offered in heaven, and is the source of so great blessings, our sin is proportionately great if we neglect it. You all remember the parable of the Marriage Supper (St. Matt. xxii. 2). The great King sent his servants to call those invited to the marriage, but they made their excuses, and went "one to his farm, another to his merchandise" (St. Matt. xxii. 4). "The rest laid hands on his servants and treated them contumeliously, and put them to

death" (St. Matt. xxii. 6). And the King "was angry, and, sending his armies, he destroyed those murderers, and burnt their city" (St. Matt. xxii. 7). But of all who, being bidden, refused to come, he pronounced that "They were not worthy" (St. Matt. xxii. 8). It is a short step from indifference to contempt, from contempt to hatred, and from hatred to persecution. The world has passed through all these stages with regard to Holy Church and her ordinances. And if we excuse ourselves as being no worse than neglectful, recollect that those who so neglected were shut out as unworthy. They excluded themselves first, and then the King shut them out for ever, so that, like Esau, they could "find no place of repentance" (Heb. xii. 17), though they should seek it with tears. They that neglect the Feasts of the Church here, will not be admitted to the heavenly feast hereafter.

But there is another class referred to in this parable which, perhaps, comes nearer home. Of those who were brought in—compelled, as St. Luke says (St. Luke xiv. 23)—by the zeal of his servants, one was found at the feast who had not on a wedding garment (St. Matt. xxii. 11). Need I explain this to you? Are there not many who do present themselves in God's temples, from custom, from human respect—possibly even from worse motives—who are present, indeed, in the body, but their hearts are far from God? (Is. xxix. 13). Will the Great King count such as His subjects, or permit them to sit at His feasts? The Commandments of the Church are spoken to the hearts of men. Unlike human ordinances, they require not only outward conformity, but an interior devotion. The pagan may have been satisfied with an observance of exterior ceremonies, but this will not satisfy a God who searches the hearts (1 Paral. xxviii. 9; Rom. viii. 27).

The Church requires that we assist with real devotion at the Holy Mass, that we join in her worship and her petitions, and that we make our own prayers at that time. If not, can we honestly say that we have heard Mass and kept the commandment of the Church. He who enters the church on Sunday as a matter of

form, while his mind is filled with plans for profit or pleasure, though he stand and kneel and genuflect with the rest of the faithful, has no right to speak with scorn of the poor Tartar, who writes his prayers on paper and leaves them to be blown round by the wind, as his act of devotion.

There is another duty connected with the day of obligation. We are commanded on such days to abstain from servile works.

By servile works are meant, generally, all those involving much bodily or manual labour, as those of labourers, builders, mechanics, etc. Those, on the contrary, in which the mind is more engaged than the body, as that of the artist or the author, are called "liberal," and are permitted. So are works of necessity, as the preparation of food, or of charity, as the tending of the sick, and so forth. The object is, that these days are to be kept as days of holy gladness, in which we remit those cares and occupations by which so many earn their daily bread, and which of necessity engage their attention during the rest of the week. Not being distracted by such cares, we have leisure of mind as well as of body to join in the great act of worship to which the faithful are summoned on this day. And though there be also many who are not usually engaged in such works as are forbidden, yet this precept has reference to them also, seeing that probably they employ others to labour for them, and it is their duty to see that no such labour be undertaken for them on these days, for which they would be responsible.

Let me remind you once more that we are here in this world to worship God. This is the prime duty of the creature. To God he owes his existence, and all the benefits which accompany it, and to God his first service is due. If He grant us, as a favour, time to spend on ourselves, this must never take the place of our service to Him, or make it secondary and subservient. Our time and our goods are His, and to Him we have to account for them. A master will not retain in his service a domestic who thinks first of himself, and then of his master, who uses his day to labour for his own profit,

and only condescends to bestow his spare time on the master to whom he is bound. Neither can we expect that God will be satisfied with such indifferent service at our hands. When, then, it is but a small time that He requires at our hands for such special service, who might with justice claim the whole of it, how great an affront do we not offer to His Majesty?

For us English Catholics this obligation ought to be easier, and to be better kept, because it is an observance which, though in a distorted form, has become national. The traffic and labour of common days is hushed among us, and he who should attempt to introduce it on the Sunday, at any rate, would be condemned by public opinion, always a strong auxiliary to any observance. It has been said that the strict observance of the Sunday is the only vestige of national religion left among us. Long may it last, and, by God's blessing, lead men back once more, as a people, to acknowledge His Sovereignty, and to submit to His Church! But this Protestant observance is too much based on Old Testament law to be a rule to Catholics; and we must, therefore, notice the contrast, in order to understand what is binding on the Catholic.

The Jewish Sabbath was commanded to be observed (i.) in honour of the Divine Rest after Creation (Ex. xx. 11); and (ii.) in honour of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt (Deut. v. 15). It is, perhaps, because the Protestant learns in his Catechism the Commandments, as taken from Exodus, that his observance of the Sunday has taken the form that it presents. But, as we have said above, the Catholic observes the Sunday by ordinance of the Church, and in honour of our Lord's Resurrection. The Commandment to observe one day in seven remains firm; but the day is changed, and the special reason of the observance is changed with it, and with these, also, the manner of the observance. In order to keep a day holy to the Lord, a man should keep his mind free from worldly cares. It is commanded, therefore, that all bodily labour should cease, and the servile work in which a man is usually engaged to earn his daily bread. And herein, there-

fore, the master is condemned who should compel his servants to labour for him on these days. But, as the holy day is a feast, all innocent enjoyment, which does not interfere with the devout hearing of Holy Mass, is permitted, and to be encouraged, as helping to make us take pleasure in the Feasts of the Church, instead of looking forward to them with dread, as a kind of penance, as Protestants too often do.

And here I should remind parents, and all superiors, of the duty binding upon them to see that their children, and those subject to them, should hear Holy Mass on the appointed days. He who strictly observes the law of the Church himself, but takes no heed that those under him do the same, will surely not be held guiltless before God. Children, as soon as they are able to understand, should be regularly taken to Church. Too many parents are ready, on the slenderest excuses of health, or even lighter grounds, to excuse their children from this duty. They forget that man's life is formed by the habits of his childhood; so that if a child is taught to be indifferent to the laws of the Church in his youth, he will certainly be so when he has attained to manhood. How will the parent be able to answer when his child, condemned for such neglect, accuses him as the cause of it before the Throne of God?

Neither is it for his children alone that a man is responsible. He is answerable for his household. His position as head gives him great influence over his servants. He is ready enough to use this for his own advantage, and quick to make conditions with this view in engaging a servant, or to dismiss one for faults from which he himself suffers. But he is bound to use this influence to promote God's interests in his house also. Many servants are young, and, perhaps, little instructed, and would quickly fall into neglect, from which they might be saved by one word from their master or mistress. Others are weak, and need the help of their superiors to protect and encourage them in fulfilling their duty. But what shall be said of Catholic masters and mistresses who hinder their servants from going to Mass? I have heard ser-

vants in Catholic homes complain that they could not go to Mass, because their employers insisted on some duty being performed at the time when they should be at Mass. How can this selfishness be excused before God, which, for the sake of a breakfast or a dinner at a certain hour, is ready to force a dependent to commit a sin?

There is an old proverb—"Meat and Mass never hindered work." Those who imagine that they will gain something by spending the Sunday, like other days, on their own profit, will find themselves cruelly mistaken. A blight rests on all their labour. If they are not visited with temporal loss in consequence, yet still the curse rests upon them, and the longer the punishment is delayed the more severely will it fall at last. All are agreed as to the first part of the proverb: no one refrains from his meals for his work's sake. It is only when God's interests, and not our own, are at stake that the temptation arises. Yet as the food refreshes our bodies, so does the sacred rest from labour, accompanied by the worship of God, refresh our minds, so that, with renewed energy, we can return to our occupations when they become once more lawful. If we are generous and faithful with God He will not be outdone in generosity, and the blessing which He will bestow on ourselves and our undertakings will amply compensate for the little sacrifice and token of homage which He requires at our hands. Why is it that towards a God so good and so bountiful we are so grudging? If He were a hard taskmaster it might be better understood; but, because He is so good, so patient, and so merciful towards us, we presume on His goodness. Let us remember that He is also just, and that He will exact penalty for our wrongdoings to the utmost farthing, if we do not reconcile ourselves to Him while there is yet time. God's Commandments cannot be broken with impunity, as some will find out when too late.

If only we kept God and eternity before our eyes, how easy and how natural would these duties become? And, more, in wilfully accepting the yoke of obedience, light as it is, which Christ lays upon us, we should learn its sweetness, the safety which lies in it, and should love it

with an increasing love. "If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy own will in my holy day, and call the Sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious, and glorify Him, while thou dost not thine own ways, and thine own will is not found, to speak a word: then shalt thou be delighted in the Lord, and I will lift thee up above the high places of the earth, and will feed thee with the inheritance of Jacob, thy father. For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it" (Is. lviii. 13, 14).

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXX.

The Hidden Life of Jesus.

"Verily Thou art a hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour" (Isaias xliv. 15).

Our Lord's life is divided into three parts: His hidden life, His public life—that is, His teaching and His Passion—and His glorified life, or the miraculous life which He led on earth after the Resurrection. The Five Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary treat entirely of His hidden life. This hidden life, my dear brethren, is full of mystery, and of instruction, and comprised by far the longest period of His sojourn upon earth. Very little is told us about it in the Holy Scriptures, but we can supply abundantly by our own meditation; and the very fact of the silence, of the humility and retirement in which our Lord so long lived, is, in itself, the most valuable of lessons.

Our Lord's life was hidden in three ways. We can first think of His hidden life in the womb, where, for nine months, He awaited the commencement of the course He was to run. "He hath rejoiced as a giant to run the way: His going out is from the end of the heaven" (Ps. xviii. 6). Virtue and grace went forth from Him, even then, for the salvation of men; every day added to the fulness of grace with which His Blessed Mother was endowed, and every day did something for that great spiritual work which He was about to begin. Then comes the hidden life at Bethlehem, His birth in the silence and darkness of night, unknown to men; all the quiet hours with His Blessed Mother, and the mysterious events which occurred in the order of His Providence. Finally, we have His hidden life at Nazareth, the great model of the retirement and humility which belong to the ordinary life of man on earth. Here His life was hidden—not,

as before, from the eyes of men, but hidden by the common, every day duties and routine by which it was surrounded. Its events are almost comprised in the words: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them" (St. Luke ii. 51).

I shall continue to-day the mysteries of our Lord's hidden life as given in the Rosary; but it will be well, perhaps, to say a word of practical instruction about the devotion of the Rosary. In the first place, every one ought to have a Rosary, and, if possible, always carry about with him his "beads." It is difficult to say the prayers accurately without them, or, at any rate, it is a distraction to be obliged to count in any other way. It is, besides, one of the customs of the Church, and a way of showing faith and devotion; and, to encourage it, a great many indulgences have been granted to those who recite the Rosary on beads which have been duly blessed.

You should begin with the Creed, and make it a very fervent act of faith, in all the truths on which you are going to meditate. You then put before your mind the scene of the mystery—for instance, our Lady's house at Nazareth, or the Stable of Bethlehem, or the Garden of Gethsemane; or, at any rate, say to yourself the name of the mystery, and think for a moment or two what it means before you begin the prayers—one Our Father and ten Hail Marys, and one *Gloria Patri* to each mystery. We all say these prayers very often, my dear brethren; but, alas! many say them with very little fruit. If we were to put the examples of our Lord's life before us more carefully, and think seriously what lesson we wanted to learn, and what grace we hoped to get, we should not find our trouble taken in vain.

Let us now consider the greatest of the Joyful Mysteries—the Nativity of our Lord—when the nine months were over, and the Son of God was born upon earth. It is the festival which unites heaven with earth, when the angels of God came on earth to seek their King: "When He bringeth in the First-Begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God adore Him" (Heb. i. 6).

"And it came to pass that in those days there went out

a decree from Cæsar Augustus, that the whole world should be enrolled. This enrolling was first made by Cyrinus, the Governor of Syria. And all went to be enrolled, everyone to his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife, who was with child. And it came to pass that, when they were there, her days were accomplished, that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her first-born Son, and wrapped Him up in swaddling clothes, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for Him in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds, watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them, Fear not; for behold, I bring to you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will. And it came to pass, after the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that is come to pass which the Lord hath showed to us. And they came with haste, and they found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger" (St. Luke ii. 1).

Our Lord's coming was the great event in the history of men: He was "the One that was to be sent," and "the Expectation of the nations." The world had been long waiting for Him, and all the changes and great events of history, worked out as they were by the wilfulness of men, had been in the hands of God the preparation for His coming. The Roman Emperor little knew that he was taking his part in this preparation; and yet it was

his decree that brought about the birth of our Lord as God had designed it.

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews . . . and assembling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, Herod asked of them where Christ should be born. But they said to Him, In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least amongst the Princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Captain who shall rule my people Israel" (St. Matt. ii. 2).

And so the decree went forth that the whole world should be enrolled, and Mary and Joseph set out on their long journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem. We can picture to ourselves how slow and weary was their progress, how much toil and hardship they had to endure, and, at the same time, how the angels of God watched over their footsteps: "In their hands shall they bear thee up, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone" (Ps. xc. 12). St. Joseph represented the Eternal Father upon earth, and with patient labour carried out the designs of His Providence. The Catechism says: "Jesus Christ had no Father on earth: St. Joseph was only His guardian, or foster-father." To him was entrusted God's sacred treasure, and full authority was given to him to execute the high office which had been laid upon Him.

Let us, then, think first of our Father in heaven, whose Will is being accomplished, willingly or unwillingly, by all creation: most willingly and lovingly by Mary and Joseph—unknown to himself by the great Roman Emperor. Let us follow the footsteps of Mary and Joseph as they enter into Bethlehem, and then wander wearily from door to door seeking shelter, "because there was no room for them in the inn." "Blessed art thou amongst women," with the blessing of bearing toil and hardship for Him; blessed in being turned away from door to door, and being forced to take shelter in the poor stable. "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." The Jews were His own people, His brethren according to the flesh; Bethlehem was the place whence His own family came; it was the seat of His great ancestor, the

city of David, and yet the Jews rejected Him, and Bethlehem could not find for Him a roof under which to lay His head.

From door to door went the Blessed Mother of God, and everywhere admittance was refused. Is not this, my dear brethren, only too exact a representation of what was to happen in after ages? Our Lord goes round to His faithful, as He did on that Christmas night to the people of Bethlehem, and would enter into their hearts, and dwell there: "Behold, I stand at the door and knock." Can we say that we have not again and again refused Him admission, "because there was no room for Him"? "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus." As we say these words, and think of Christmas night, we should be full of zeal to prepare a place for Him in our hearts, less cold and dreary than the stable at Bethlehem. "Fear not, for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy." The world went on its course, heedless of these good tidings, engaged in its work, or its pleasures, or its repose. "For while all things were in quiet silence, and the night was in the midst of her course, the Almighty Word leaped down from heaven from Thy royal throne" (Wisdom xviii. 14).

The messengers of God sought, not the great people of the earth, but poor shepherds "keeping the night watches over their sheep." The angels had no message for Herod in the capital city of Jerusalem hard by; they had no message for the crowds of distinguished people who were gathered together in Bethlehem, boasting that they were "of the house and family of David," but their good tidings were to be spoken to the poor and the outcast, because One had come "to seek and to save what had perished."

"Glory be to God on high, and on earth peace." We cannot meditate on the Nativity without joining in that which was its great object—to glorify God. As we say the prayers of this mystery, we must make every word a song of praise, to praise the Lord for the wonders of His Incarnation which have now been displayed. "We give Thee thanks for Thy great glory, O Lord God, Heavenly

King, God the Father Almighty. O Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; O Lord God, Lamb of God, Son of the Father, who takest away the sins of the world."

We give God thanks for His own great glory, and because He has deigned to make this glory manifest to men. "We have seen His glory, the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth." But peace to men goes with glory to God. It is the great work of the Incarnate to reconcile these, which by sin had been opposed to each other, and seemed incompatible. "Mercy and truth have met each other; justice and peace have kissed. Truth is sprung out of the earth, and justice hath looked down from heaven" (Ps. lxxxiv. 11).

"Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." Blessed be that gentle and tender fruit of the womb, who came on earth to bring peace to men. He brought it not to the great and the rich, to those who are filled with good things, on whom the sun of prosperity shines, and who are sheltered from the sorrows of life, but to all "men of good will." He gives it to the poor and the outcast, the captive and the suffering, just as freely as to those who are surrounded by every good thing of earth. It is "the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding" (Philip iv. 7), which this world cannot give, nor earthly riches supply, but must be obtained from Him who is the source of all true peace.

"And this shall be a sign to you: You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, and laid in a manger." "Let us go to Bethlehem, and let us see this Word that has come to pass." This, my dear brethren, is the word that goes forth to all creation, on this Christmas night on which we are meditating: "*Venite, venite in Bethlehem, natum videte, regem angelorum, venite adoremus.*" "Come, come to Bethlehem, see born the King of angels; come, let us adore." Let the heavens send forth their hosts of angels to adore their new-born Lord; let the children of men flock in crowds to join with the shepherds in contemplating this wonder—"this Word that has come to pass." Let us also, my brethren,

go there in spirit as we recite this mystery; let us claim our share in the joy of His birth, for He has come to be our Saviour. He knows what our needs are, and has come to supply all our wants, "for a child is born to us and a Son is given to us."

"And they came with haste, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger." How poor is this palace of the King of Kings! See the rough walls open to the winds of heaven, the rude furniture, the manger, the straw, the ox and the ass, and think that this is all of its treasures that earth offered to its Creator! But though His house is so poor to mortal eyes, yet it is the home of peace and joy which surpass all understanding. We cannot see the angels who hover around, to shroud with their wings their Infant Lord; but there they are, with all their celestial treasures—the angels of God, with their surpassing beauty and grandeur—the Seraphim, with their burning hearts. We cannot see the treasures of grace and holiness with which the hearts of Mary and Joseph are filled, but they surpass all the gifts hitherto bestowed upon men, and are infinitely more precious than the gold and jewels of earth; we cannot see the Infinite and Uncreated Wisdom, the fulness of the Godhead which lies hidden in the mortal form of that new-born child, but before His Infinity and Immensity all heaven and earth bow down.

"They found Mary and Joseph and the Infant lying in the manger." Our Lord would show Himself to His people in the company of that loving Mother whom He had chosen. She had brought Him into the world, and she had to present Him to His people. It is her day of triumph and joy—the day which was to compensate her for all the hardship of the past. "Blessed art thou amongst women." Blessed with a blessing which no other created being can share—the incommunicable privilege of being Mother of God; blessed with an exceeding peace and joy with which the sight of thy Divine Son in His humble cot fills thy heart! Blessed in thy first adoration of thy Son and thy God, blessed in those first acts of tender maternal care which thou didst lavish on

Him. Blessed as the chosen means by which salvation is brought to thy people.

Eia ergo advocata nostra—"Come, then, our advocate, and turn upon us thine eyes of mercy, and show us Jesus, the blessed fruit of thy womb." The one thing we need is to see and to adore our Infant Saviour, to receive Him, as it were, into our arms, to thank Him for the mystery of this night, and to hear what is the message of love which He brings to each. "Last of all, in these days, He hath spoken to us by His Son" (Heb. i. 2). The birth of Christ is a word which the Eternal God speaks to the heart of every man. He has something to say to each one of us, and He speaks to us by His Son, by the voice of that "Word made flesh" who this night comes amongst us.

This is the scene, and these are some of the thoughts, which we must try to have before us as we recite this mystery of the Rosary, and we can make every word an act of glory to God, of congratulation with His Blessed Mother, and of tender and loving adoration of our Lord Jesus Christ born amongst us.

But even on this night our Lord shows Himself our teacher. He comes down to teach men, and He will not delay. The stable of Bethlehem is the great school of humility and poverty; there, best of all, may we learn to despise this world—so far, at least, as not to set our hearts on its good things; there may we learn, if not to love poverty as the saints did, at least to bear it with cheerfulness. In it we may bear to be forgotten and passed over by men, and hidden in obscurity. Our Lord teaches us, not by words, but by His example. He to whom belongs "the earth and the fulness thereof" is contented with this poor and humble lodging, and is willing to endure all the privations which belong to poverty. Who so poor as the Babe of Bethlehem? Even the poorest amongst us has a better roof to cover him, and a better bed to lie on, than our Infant Saviour chose for Himself.

We are told that St. Francis, the great apostle of holy poverty, had a special devotion to our Lord's Nativity, "by reason of the poverty, cold, and nakedness in which

the Divine Infant made His appearance in the stable and crib at Bethlehem. One Christmas night, the saint having sung the Gospel at Mass, preaching to the people on the Nativity, he was not able to satiate the tender affection of his heart by repeating often, with incredible sweetness, His Holy Name, under the appellation of the Little Babe of Bethlehem. He never spoke or heard mention made of the holy mystery of the Incarnation without feeling the most tender affection and devotion. He was particularly affected with those words, The Word was made flesh" *(Butler's Lives of the Saints)*.

I think the story is also told of him, how one day he was seated in the refectory, with all his monks at their poor dinner, which was served to them in the most rigorous poverty, whilst the history of our Lord's Nativity was read out loud to them. When St. Francis heard of the Infant lying in the manger, he burst into tears, and cried out, "Shall a sinner such as I am be served in this sumptuous way, when the Lord of Glory lay on straw in the stable at Bethlehem?" and, rising from the table, he sat on the ground to finish his meal.

Our Lord teaches us contented poverty, and He also teaches us to bear slights and humiliations, and not to care too much about the opinions of men. Shall we be so much grieved, if the world forgets us, or thinks ill of us, when this same world forgot and despised our Master Himself?

But Christmas Night does not conclude the mysteries of our Lord's birth: it is only the beginning of wonders. He came, not for a passing visit, but to spend with us the long years of His exile. He comes to make His home amongst us, that all Christian virtues may spring up around Him, and scatter their savour throughout the world. He has taught us poverty and the contempt of worldly luxury in His Nativity: He would teach us to bear pain and humiliation at His Circumcision. "And after eight days were accomplished that the Child should be circumcised, His name was called Jesus, which was called by the angel before He was conceived in the womb" (St. Luke ii. 21). He had come to take upon Himself the form of a sinner, and to allow Himself to be reckoned

amongst sinners, in order that He might take their iniquities upon Him: "And the Scripture was fulfilled, which saith: And with the wicked He was reputed" (St. Mark xv. 28). Circumcision was the mark of a sinner—it was the rite by which a sin was to be remitted; and when our Lord submitted to this rite, He, as it were, declared Himself a sinner; and the holy name of Jesus, which He assumed at the same time, announced that He had taken upon Himself the sins and the punishment of His people. "Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb Jesus;" may we not spare one Hail Mary as a special thanksgiving for this act of humiliation, and for the blood which He first shed on that day?

By His Circumcision, too, He, as it were, places Himself under the law. The law could not bind Him, except in so far as He voluntarily took it upon Himself, and St. Paul declares that he who is circumcised, becomes "a debtor to the whole law" (Gal. v. 3). Our Lord, then, took up the yoke freely, that He might teach and encourage those who, by nature, are subject to the law. Oh, my brethren, can we think of this sacred, tender Infant Jesus taking upon Himself the heavy burden, taking it up with pain and humiliation, without at least desiring to imitate Him in His obedience? He undertook in His infancy to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross;" and shall we murmur if we are called upon to submit to the easy yoke of the Christian law? "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart: and you shall find rest for your souls. For my yoke is sweet and my burden is light" (St. Matt. xi. 29). "It is good for a man when he hath borne the yoke from his youth" (Lament. iii. 27). Are not these the lessons which our Blessed Lord would give us in His Circumcision?

Three great feasts are solemnized to complete the celebration of our Lord's nativity. Christmas and its octave day, the Feast of the Circumcision, have placed their lesson before us, and the Epiphany alone remains. The Epiphany, or twelfth day, is celebrated on January 6, and it means the *manifestation* of our Lord.

"When Jesus, therefore, was born in Bethlehem of Juda in the days of King Herod, behold there came wise men from the East to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him. And King Herod, hearing this, was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And assembling together all the chief priests and Scribes of the people, he inquired of them where Christ should be born. But they said to him, In Bethlehem of Juda. For so it is written by the prophet, And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least amongst the princes of Juda, for out of thee shall come forth the captain that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, privately calling the wise men, learned diligently of them the time of the star which appeared to them; and, sending them into Bethlehem, said, Go and diligently inquire after the Child, and, when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may also come and adore Him. Who, having heard the king, went their way: and behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them, until it came and stood over where the Child was. And seeing the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and, falling down, they adored Him: and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh. And having received an answer in sleep, that they should not return to Herod, they went back another way into their own country" (St. Matt. ii. 1).

In the Epiphany we have before us the same scene which Christmas Night presented to our view; but the spirit of it is quite different, and our Lord teaches us a new lesson. He was come to establish a kingdom upon earth, which, beginning in the stable of Bethlehem, was to spread through the world, and be continued to the end of time in His Catholic Church. He would teach us the duties we owe to Him in this His kingdom—the inward devotion and the outward loyalty which we are bound to pay to Him as our Ruler. He has "the empire on His shoulder," and He is the "Captain" to rule the

people of God, and, with the wise men, we must offer Him our devotion and loyalty. "Falling down, they adored Him, and opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts—gold, frankincense, and myrrh."

He teaches us also the conditions of His earthly kingdom. "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him" (St. Matt ii. 13). On earth our Lord and His disciples must always be prepared for persecution and for flight. No matter how prosperous things may appear to be, the storm may be close at hand.

"Wonder not, brethren, if the world hate you" (1 St. John iii. 13). We cannot be true disciples of Christ, if we are not prepared to take our share of the persecution directed against Him—if we will not follow Him in His flight into Egypt. "Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death." This should be the spirit of every true subject of our Crucified King.

I will conclude with a passage from St. Leo the Great: "The Word made flesh was pleased to reveal Himself by degrees to those for whom He had come. When Jesus was born, He was manifested, indeed, to the believing, but hidden from His enemies. Already, indeed, the heavens declared the glory of God . . . and now the guiding star leadeth the wise men to worship Him, that, from the rising of the sun to the going down thereof, the birth of the true King may be known abroad." The very cruelty of Herod, when he strove to crush at His birth this King, whom he alone feared, was made a blind means to carry out this dispensation of mercy.

"While the tyrant, with horrid guilt, sought to slay the little Child, he did not know, amid an indiscriminate slaughter of innocents, his infamous act served to spread wider abroad the heaven-told news of the Birth of our Lord. Thus were these glad tidings loudly proclaimed, both by the novelty of their story and the iniquity of their enemies" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXI.

The Lord in His Temple.

"And presently the Lord whom you seek, and the angel of the Testament whom you desire, shall come to His Temple" (Mal. iii. 1).

The Temple of Jerusalem, my dear brethren, was the first house built on earth for the worship of the true God. The great servant of God, King David, had longed to build a house, and it had not been allowed to him. He said to Nathan the Prophet: Dost thou see that I dwell in a house of cedar, and the ark of God is under skins? And Nathan said to David: Go, do all that is in thy heart, for God is with thee. Now, that night the word of the Lord came to Nathan, saying: Go and speak to David, my servant, thus saith the Lord: Thou shalt not build me a house to dwell in. For I have not remained in a house from the time that I brought up Israel to this day . . . and when thou shalt have ended thy days to go to thy fathers, I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom: he shall build me a house, and I will establish his throne for ever" (1 Paral. xvii. 1).

David considered it honour enough for him to prepare building materials, and to get together precious things to ornament the Temple which his son was to build. The Temple was the great work of Solomon's reign: he received a special gift of wisdom to execute it, and, when it was finished, it was the most glorious and perfect structure that man could execute, and it was meant to be the type of the Christian Church. The Temple was dedicated, and "it came to pass, when the priests were come out of the sanctuary, that a cloud filled the house of the Lord. And the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the Lord had filled the house

of the Lord." And Solomon said: "I stand in the room of David, my father, and sit upon the throne of Israel as the Lord promised: and have built a house to the name of the Lord God of Israel, and have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the Lord, which He made with our fathers, when they came out of the land of Egypt" (3 Kings viii. 10).

This glorious Temple was destroyed, and the people were carried into captivity, but God, who had once taken up His abode with His people, would not withdraw His presence from them. A new Temple was built when the Jews returned from their captivity. "And when the masons laid the foundations of the temple of the Lord, the priests stood in their ornaments with trumpets; and the Levites, the sons of Asaph, with cymbals, to praise God by the hands of David, King of Israel, and praise to the Lord. But many of the priests and the Levites and the chief of the fathers and the ancients that had seen the former temple, when they had the foundation of this temple before their eyes, wept with a loud voice" (1 Esdras iii. 10).

They wept as they thought of the old Temple, because this new building appeared small and mean in comparison with the first, but they did not know that an honour was reserved for it, far greater than had ever been conferred on Solomon's Temple. "For thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Yet a little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth and the sea and the dry land. And I will move all nations, and the Desired of all Nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts. . . Great shall be the glory of this last house, more than of the first, saith the Lord of Hosts, and in this place I will give peace" (Aggeus ii. 7). The first Temple had been called the house of the Lord because His presence was there represented, in a special manner, by the Ark of the Covenant and the Mercy-seat on the extended wings of the cherubim. It was, however, only a representation; "to this end only is it made, that Thou mayest regard the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplication, O Lord my God" (2 Paral. vi. 19). Its

great excellence was in this, that it was the forerunner of a house in which God was to dwell by a real personal presence; and we now have to consider this mystery in which the Lord first took possession of His Temple on earth.

"And after the days of her purification, according to the law of Moses, were accomplished, they carried Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord: as it was written in the law of the Lord, that every male opening the womb shall be called holy to the Lord; and to offer sacrifice according as it is written in the law of the Lord, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons. And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem named Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Ghost was in him. And he received an answer from the Holy Ghost that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord. And he came by the Spirit into the Temple. And when his parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, he also took Him into his arms, and blessed God, and said, Now, Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples. A light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people, Israel. And His father and mother were wondering at those things which were spoken concerning Him. And Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His Mother, Behold this Child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted, and thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed. And there was one Anna, a prophetess . . . and she was a widow until four score and four years, who departed not from the Temple, by fastings and prayers, serving night and day. Now, she, at the same time, coming in, confessed to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all who looked for the redemption of Israel. And after they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their city Nazareth" (St. Luke ii. 22).

The Church celebrates our Lord's Presentation in the Temple on the Feast of the Purification of the Blessed Virgin Mary, February 2. "When the days of her Purification were accomplished"—that is, forty days after the Nativity, counting both Christmas Day and the Purification. It is also called Candlemas Day, because candles are blessed and distributed to the people on that day, and in the Procession and during Mass we hold them in our hands, in memory of our Lord's appearance in His temple, as "light to the revelation of the Gentiles."

In the blessing of the candles, the Church refers to our Lord's presentation in these terms: "O Everlasting God, who on this day did present Thy only-begotten Son to be received in the arms of holy Simeon in Thy holy Temple, we humbly entreat Thy clemency, that Thou wouldst vouchsafe to bless, sanctify, and kindle with the light of Thy heavenly benediction these candles, which we, Thy servants, desire to receive and carry lighted in honour of Thy Name, that by offering them to Thee, O Lord God, being worthily inflamed with the holy fire of Thy most sweet charity, we may deserve to be presented in the holy Temple of Thy glory."

It is the custom for the faithful to take these candles home with them, and to keep them for solemn occasions —as, for example, when the Blessed Sacrament is brought to the house for the Communion of the sick. Candles are used also on another occasion, and that is, when women come to the church, to give thanks after child-birth, for their "churching." It is the ceremony which corresponds to Purification, commanded in the law of Moses. They appear in the porch of the church, carrying a candle, and are led to the altar to make their thanksgiving and to receive the Church's blessing on themselves and their offspring.

Now, let us consider the lessons given to us in this mystery. Our Lord and His Blessed Mother did not disdain to comply, in the most literal and exact manner, with the law of Moses. She went to the Temple to be purified. He was presented to the Lord as an ordinary first-born son, and was bought back again by two turtle

doves, the offering of the poor, which were offered in His stead. Great people amongst men, or those who consider themselves, in some respect or other, to be above their neighbours, often think that they may reasonably claim exemption from the general laws of the Church; but our Lord wanted no such exemption. Throughout His whole life, His great characteristic was that of obedience to law.

But this outward formal offering was only a symbol of the great offering really made. Mary with joy offered her Son to Almighty God, the greatest offering ever made by a creature to her Creator. Like Anna, the mother of Samuel, she says: "I have lent Him to the Lord, all the days of His life He shall be lent to the Lord" (1 Kings i. 28). She knew how great was the sacrifice, and how great the offering; but she made it as the handmaid of the Lord: she was prepared to receive that sword of grief which was to pierce her heart, even before it was foretold to her. She was to give back to the Lord, to do His Will, and to be obedient unto death, that Son whom He had given to her: and she was to give Him back, without regard to the pain which the offering would cost her mother's heart. Her offering was to be a type of that sacrifice of the highest and tenderest feelings which men are sometimes called upon to make.

But the great work which we have to contemplate is that of our Lord Himself. He appears to be passive; He allows Himself to be offered in the Temple, and to be redeemed by the legal sacrifices; to be placed in Simeon's arms, and to be given back to His Blessed Mother as others will—but all that is done is His work, and it is His action that gives its value to everything that is done. "He was offered, because it was His own will" (Isaias liii. 7). This, His first offering in the Temple by the loving hands of His Mother, was just as much by His own will, as the offering which He was afterwards to make on the cross.

We must think, then, before all things, of that full and loving offering which Jesus in the Temple made of Himself, and of all that He was to do and suffer for man's

redemption. In this offering was included all the years of toil which He was to pass on earth, the obscurity of His hidden life, the labours of His ministry, and the ignominies of His Passion. "The Son of man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister;" He came, "not to do His own Will, but the Will of Him who sent Him;" He came "to seek and to save what had perished;" and now, in His childhood, He makes for us a loving oblation of all these labours. "*Quærens me sedisti lassus, redemisti crucem passus, tantus labor non sit cassus.*" "Thou didst sit down wearied seeking me; Thou hast redeemed me by the suffering of Thy cross, let not this labour be in vain." How great was the burden which the Sacred Heart of the Infant Jesus took upon itself when He presented Himself in the Temple as the Redeemer of men!

But Simeon and Anna were sent by God's Providence to receive our Lord, and do Him honour at His Presentation. St. Augustine says: "Blessed be the glory of Him that came from heaven to earth! While yet He was borne in His Mother's womb, He was saluted by St. John the Baptist; He was presented in the Temple, and recognized by that famous ancient and glorious worthy, the old man Simeon. As soon as he knew Him, he worshipped Him, and said, Lord, now lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation! He lingered in the world to see the birth of Him who made the world. The old man knew the Child, and in that Child became a child himself, for in the love wherewith he regarded the Father of all, he felt his own years to be but as of yesterday. The old man Simeon bore the new-born Christ, and all the while Christ was the old man's Lord. It had been told him by the Lord that he should not taste of death before he had seen the birth of the Lord's Christ. Now Christ is born, and all the old man's wishes on earth are fulfilled. He that came to a decrepit world came to an old man" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

Simeon received Him into his arms with joy. Who can tell the floods of joy and peace and the treasures of

grace which filled the heart of that old man as the Infant Jesus was gently placed in his arms? He cannot contain himself, but breaks forth into his song of exultation and praise of the goodness of God which has given to him to see with mortal eyes "the Light to the Revelation of the Gentiles," and the glory of Israel. Can we read this, my dear brethren, without thinking of what should be our feelings when we receive our Lord in the Holy Sacrament? There is our Lord once more in His Temple, allowing Himself to be offered by His priests as once by His Blessed Mother. He appears as unconscious and as passive now as He then did, but is just as much the principal Actor in all that is done, and, as such, is again making His offering in the Temple. He allows Himself to be given to you at your Communion, as He was to Simeon, and it is your own fault if He is not to you also "a light to the revelation of the Gentiles"—"the light shining in darkness." It is your own fault if you do not receive your share of the graces which filled up the happiness of Simeon so as to leave him no further desire on earth. "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, according to Thy word, in peace, because my eyes have seen Thy salvation."

But joy and sorrow, peace and war, must always be mixed together in our Lord's life. Holy Simeon has something to tell us besides of the joy that fills his own heart: "Behold, this Child is set for the fall, and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted." It is the misfortune of our race that whatever graces and blessings God gives, the perversity of man is able to turn them into an evil to themselves. This we see in all the inferior gifts of God's Providence, and we may see it also in the great work of Redemption.

God sent men a Redeemer as the One Thing necessary for them, but they would not receive Him: "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not." By not receiving Him, they rejected Him, and so not only lost the blessings which He had designed for them, but turned them to their own destruction. These words, my dear brethren, ought to make us think of ourselves and of all

the blessings which God gives to us: how are we receiving them? We must, at least, take care not to turn blessings into curses, by rejecting the graces God offers to us.

"And thine own soul a sword shall pierce." This prediction is commonly considered as the first of the "Seven Dolours" of our Blessed Lady. It pleased God that she should share in all things with her Divine Son. She had her part in the hardships of His Nativity, His flight into Egypt, and His hidden life; she stood at the foot of His cross, and suffered with Him, and was thus made worthy of her title of Queen of Martyrs. All this was foretold to her from the beginning, so that the sword's point might be continually at her breast. Even on this, the triumphant day when she presented her Son in the Temple, she was to begin to taste the sorrow of losing Him, and to anticipate the agony of the cross.

Once again we find our Lord in His Temple. He takes possession of it, not only as a place of sacrifice, but as a school from whence His word shall go forth to men.

The Fifth Joyful Mystery describes to us the one incident recorded of our Lord during the long interval between His infancy and His public life—that is, "the finding of the Child Jesus in the Temple." It is recorded in these words: "And the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom; and the grace of God was in Him. And His parents went every year to Jerusalem, at the solemn day of the Pasch. And when He was twelve years, they going up into Jerusalem, according to the custom of the feast, and having fulfilled the days, when they returned, the Child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. And thinking that He was in the company, they came a day's journey and sought Him among their kinsfolk and acquaintance. And not finding Him, they returned into Jerusalem, seeking Him. And it came to pass that, after three days, they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers. And seeing Him, they wondered. And

His Mother said to Him, Son, why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing. And He said to them, How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business? And they understood not the word that He spoke unto them. And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them. And His Mother kept all these words in her heart. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age, and grace with God and men" (St. Luke ii. 40).

In this Mystery we have our Lord's first independent action, and listen to His first words. His first action was to remain behind in Jerusalem, so as to be found in the midst of the doctors; and His first words were to give a great lesson. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" His presentation in the Temple was a type of that constant offering up of Himself by the hands of His priests, which He was to perpetuate. And His being found in the midst of the doctors may be taken to represent the permanent teaching authority which He was to establish in His Church, in which He was to be constantly "in the midst of the doctors."

But let us attend more particularly to the lessons which this mystery teaches. We have, first, that lesson which our Lord seems never weary of giving to us—the lesson of obedience to law in the outward duties of religion. Think of Jesus going, year after year, to Jerusalem, not shrinking from the toil and hardship of a long journey, in order to take part in the sacrifices prescribed, so as to "fulfil the days according to the custom of the feast." What a reproach to those who grudge our Lord the little trouble attached to the Easter duties asked of Christians! What our Lord did was but the figure of the more sacred and sublime rites which He was to institute. He Himself took all that trouble to join in the figurative Paschal Lamb—whereas we are called to participate in the true Pasch which these figures represented.

Our Lord takes this occasion to foreshadow His future teaching in His Church, and yet He does it in a way

suitable to the age and position which He has assumed. He is found in the midst of the doctors, not as a teacher, but "hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers." He was Himself the Hidden Wisdom of God, and yet He chose to manifest His wisdom by the docility which befitted His age: He would appear to be learning —He would be submissive to the teaching of others, and by His very docility He would teach. Can we have a better illustration of the lesson contained in St. Paul's words, "Not to be more wise than it behoveth to be wise, but to be wise unto sobriety"? We find amongst men a constant desire to make a display of their little attainments, and to exalt knowledge above obedience; and yet, the first lesson which our Lord gives is that of hiding His knowledge, and "hearing and asking questions," although He was Himself the great Teacher of mankind.

This is a great lesson for all men, but especially for young people. Knowledge is an excellent thing, but it brings with it the temptation to self-sufficiency and a contempt for authority, and it is very apt to display itself by a premature assumption of independence and disregard of the opinions of those over us. From our Lord's example we are to learn that true wisdom shows itself in docility and reverence for those appointed to teach.

"Behold, Thy father and I have sought Thee sorrowing." There is something very touching in the three days' search which Mary and Joseph made after our Lord. How full of trouble and anxiety were those days!—how full of bodily weariness, as they hurried from place to place, seeking Him everywhere!—how full of mental suffering! Our Lord knew this, and He permitted it, not, we know very well, because He was indifferent to their pain, but He willed that His Blessed Mother should be an example in all kinds of sorrow, and, therefore, should experience the pain of anxiety.

"Sought Him sorrowing." We can fancy how great was her distress at finding that she had lost Him, and the diligence and perseverance which she showed in that three days' search, and that she knew no rest till she had

found Him once more. Is not this a most important example to us? If we find that we have lost our Lord, either by grievous sin, which really separates us from Him, or by dissipation of mind and coldness of heart, which have hidden Him from our sight, do we "seek Him sorrowing?"—or are we indifferent as to the loss?

But we come to the lesson our Lord Himself teaches us—the one lesson He gives in words during His hidden life. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" He came to do, not His own will, but the will of the Father, who sent Him, and every action and every word of His life was directed towards this one object. In the stable of Bethlehem and the holy house of Nazareth, in the ordinary duties of His hidden life, in all those years which seemed mere waiting and inactivity, He was doing the will of His Father just as much as when He was completing His work on the cross. "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" Every thing that He did was "His Father's business;" even in those things which in the eyes of men seemed the least important.

This is the great lesson our Lord gives for daily life. We cannot give much time to our Father's business, if we think that His work is nothing but prayer and the exercises of religion; but if we do *everything* with the intention to please God, and in the manner to please God, then every word and action may be made part of our duty to Him. There is a well-known story, told, I think, of St. Francis de Sales, the Bishop of Geneva, which well illustrates our Lord's lesson. One day the holy Bishop was at recreation with some of his clergy, and they began talking of what they would do if they knew they had to appear before God on that very day. One would recite his office, another betake himself to this prayer, or that good work, and so forth. The Bishop, however, said: "I should finish this game of chess that I am playing. I began it to please God, and I should go on with it." St. Francis had learned to make everything which he did, work or amusement alike, his Father's business.

The most common-place and laborious work of life, and all the reasonable and innocent recreations by which that work is diversified, however trivial they may appear in themselves, may all be made, in their place, the work of your Heavenly Father, just as well as prayer and the duties of religion. God knows that such things are necessary for us: "Your Father knows that you stand in need of all these things" (St. Matt. vi. 32)—as our Lord Himself tells us—and, therefore, will not disdain to accept them as His work, if only they are done with a good intention to please Him.

"And He went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject to them." This is the next great lesson of our Lord's hidden life—the lesson of subjection. Why did our Lord spend so many years in obscurity? For what else except to teach us to bear that subjection and dependence on the will of others which must necessarily be the lot of most men? It is not mere obedience to actual commands that our Lord would teach us, but the spirit of obedience—that is, willingness to be put under others, when such is the Will of God—humility and deference to the opinions of those placed over us, and readiness to give up our own will: all this is implied in "being subject." Let us think of our Lord for all those years "subject" to Mary and Joseph—doing their will and not His own, obeying them in humility and submission—and then we shall not think it so hard if we, too, are sometimes called upon to be subject for His sake.

In meditating on these two Mysteries, then, we have "the Lord in His Temple:" He is there offering Himself for men, and giving them the example of self-sacrifice: He is there as a Teacher, and yet, in the very act of teaching, whilst men "were astonished at His wisdom and His answers," He contrives to set an example of docility and reverence for authority.

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SERMON LXXII.

The Bread of Life.

BY THE VERY REV. G. AKERS.

"He that eateth me shall live by me."

One thing, my dear brethren, so lies on the surface of all our Lord's Commandments, whether spoken with His human mouth, or by the mouth of the Church, that it seems impossible to overlook it; and that is, that they are given with the tenderest solicitude for our welfare. It would seem almost as if He had forgotten His own glory and His own interests, sacrificing them to the happiness of the sheep whom He had ransomed with His own Blood. He forbids sin: but by sin we deform the image of God within us, and render ourselves incapable of eternal happiness. He commands us to worship Him: but true worship draws us near to the source of all good, and fits us to dwell with Him for ever. It is a certain truth, of which our experience ought daily more thoroughly to convince us, that there is no command laid upon us, the fulfilment of which does not evidently conduce to our greater happiness, and that not only in another life, of which we have as yet no experience, but in the present time. Who that has made any sacrifice, however trifling, in obedience to the law of God, but feels within him a peace and consolation to which nothing earthly can be compared? Who, on the other hand, against the warnings of his conscience, has disobeyed the Divine Law, but experiences a trouble of soul, which no temporal gain can compensate for? Truly, the law of God, and it alone, guides our feet into the way of peace! There can be no clearer proof of the awful blindness and perverted judgment into which the world has fallen through sin, than that there should be any who

shrink from the law of God, as something hard and harsh, and offensive to human nature.

But, if it be true of all God's precepts, that they are "More to be desired than gold and many precious stones, sweeter than honey and the honey-comb" (Ps. xviii. 11), this is above measure true of that precept which commands us to receive His Precious Body and Blood in Holy Communion. The wonder is, that a command is needed. If we consider who is the giver, what the gift, and to whom it is offered, we are lost in astonishment, not at the command to receive it, but at the condescension which deigns to give it, and even to press it, so graciously and so earnestly, on sluggish and unwilling souls.

We have received many and stupendous proofs of the goodness of God to His creatures. Creation itself is an act of amazing love; and creation includes also the wonderful love which preserves and protects the creature whom God has made, and even endures, with Divine patience, his reiterated offences. But, if we dare say it, God has outdone this wonder in Redemption, when "He spared not even His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all" (Rom. viii. 32). But, in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, God has outdone even this mark of love; or, as we should, perhaps, rather say, has summed up in it all His other acts of love, making it the filled-up measure of His gifts, which He presents to the human soul. If only to a few of His greatest saints, after a life of holiness and heroism, this gift were once granted, it would immeasurably exceed all their possible deserts. Mary Immaculate, Queen of Saints, herself could not merit this favour, for it exceeds human merit. Yet it is not to a few, or once, or after long labours, that this gift of gifts is offered, but to all the faithful, and continually, and to the sinner, who has no sign of virtue to show but his sincere repentance for his sins! And it is to this stupendous generosity that men are indifferent, if not contemptuous, when they turn away from the Table of the Lord!

Perhaps, if it had been required of us to approach

Holy Communion frequently, as a condition of being Christians and Catholics at all, there might be an excuse for diffidence and fear; for we know what St. Paul has said of those who approach the Table of the Lord unworthily. "He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself" (1 Cor. xi. 29). Unwillingness to communicate might cloak itself under the cover of humility. But, while we are, indeed, *invited* to approach the holy altar frequently, and are taught to call this gift of God "our Daily Bread," the *command*, which we cannot disobey without sin, requires of us Communion only once a year. There is no room here for a false humility. It is hardly possible to imagine that any one, without perverse self-deception, can plead that he dare not, even so rarely, come to Holy Communion. It is to say that he will not even so far turn from the world and its temporal cares and interests as to prepare himself one day in the year to receive into his soul his Creator and Redeemer. He is so indifferent to the gift of God and his privileges as a Catholic, that he will not perform one act to declare himself a member of Christ, and hoping for the kingdom of heaven. What wonder that the Church pronounces that he is to be excommunicated? He has excommunicated himself. He has trampled under foot the precious pearl which was offered to him, and declared himself unworthy of the mercies of God. It is in order to prevent any such self-delusion, and to strengthen the weak and scrupulous conscience, that the Church gives us this command.

The Commandment, in the words of the Catechism, runs thus: "To receive the Blessed Sacrament at least once a year, and that at Easter or thereabouts." This last word signifies that all the faithful are bound to receive Holy Communion at Easter time—that is, usually, from between Ash Wednesday and Low Sunday. This period is sometimes prolonged.

Consider the necessity of this Commandment.

God offers us death or life, blessing or cursing. There is no third alternative. We are, by our life here, earning ourselves either life eternal or the eternal death of the soul in

hell. "Consider that I have set before thee this day life and good; and, on the other hand, death and evil" (Deut. xxx. 15). Either our spiritual life is growing stronger every day, or is waning away. When it is gone altogether, as it goes by mortal sin, then our soul is spiritually dead; and, if we pass out of this life in that condition, we must suffer eternal death. Now, our spiritual life consists in the grace of God. When that grace was first given us, at our Baptism, we were spiritually born, and, as long as it remains in us, we live; but, to maintain bodily life, it is necessary that we take food. If a man refuse to take all nourishment, though he be in perfect health, his strength gradually wastes away, and at length he dies. So it is also with the soul: it cannot retain the life of grace without spiritual nourishment. But, as the soul is infinitely more excellent than the body, it requires also a more excellent food; and God, in His wonderful condescension, has provided for it a food the most precious that can be conceived—namely, the Most Precious Body and Blood of His Son Jesus Christ. To show the wonderful love that He bears to us, and the infinite price that He sets on our soul, He provides for it this nourishment, out of proportion to all its possible deserts, and proportioned only to His Divine generosity. We cannot conceive, even on the part of God, any more wonderful token of His favour; and, had He not done this, we could not have conceived so great a gift to be possible.

But, as we have seen, this gift is not only most wonderful and precious, but it is necessary, and necessary for all. There are some favours, very great, which God grants to certain of His friends, which are marks of His love, indeed, but by no means necessary to salvation—as, for instance, the marks of the Five Wounds imprinted on St. Francis, or the ecstasy in which St. Paul was caught up into heaven; but this is no such superfluous favour. Our souls need Holy Communion, that they may live; there is no other means of living. And it is given us for this purpose pre-eminently. It is Jesus Christ Himself who says, "I am the Living Bread, which came down from heaven. If any man eat of this Bread, He shall

live for ever" (John vi. 52). And again, "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you" (Ib. vi. 52). There are, indeed, many other blessings which flow from a devout Communion—as, that it is "the antidote by which we are delivered from our daily faults, and preserved from mortal sin" (C. of Trent, sess. xiii., c. 2); and again, that it causes an ineffable union with Christ, and that it diminishes the force of sinful inclination within us. But that for which Jesus Christ especially instituted the Blessed Sacrament, and for which the Church commands us to receive it, is, as our Catechism tells us, to feed and nourish our souls, that we may live by Him.

We have a work to do. We are placed here to serve God—that is, to do His will, and keep His Commandments, to subdue all our evil inclinations, to do the good works which He puts in our way, and to resist the temptations with which we are assailed. This work requires not only life, but vigour. The force of evil is strong within us, we are continually beset with temptations; our enemies are far stronger than we are, and, if left to ourselves, we are quite unable to cope with them, and must necessarily fall a prey to their malice. Whence, then, shall we derive the necessary vigour, but from this heavenly food? An angel provided Elias with food, when he fled from Jezabel, and, "In the strength of that food" we are told, "he walked forty days and forty nights, unto the Mount of God" (3 Kings xix. 8). The Blessed Sacrament it is of which that food was the type, and in the strength of it, the faithful communicant may hope to walk the whole of his pilgrimage, until he reach the heavenly mountain on which God is enthroned. How many times we fall into sin, after having, perhaps, made some feeble effort to resist it! And is this not because our Communions are so few, and so indevout? How must it be, then, with those who think to live their life without Holy Communion and yet be saved at last? Every venial sin which we commit impairs the grace of God, and renders us also more feeble to resist the temptation to greater sins. Slowly and subtly the tempter weaves his snares

round about us, while we lie in the torpor of self-confidence, forgetful of the help which God has provided, and perhaps despising it. Slowly, but surely, the stream of grace ebbs away from our souls, leaving them at last dry and barren; perhaps there is no great sin, for the tempter fears to startle us from our false security. But life is ebbing, too; and when the end comes, and, with the terror of death and judgment before us, we rouse ourselves to cry for help and struggle against our bonds, the voice dies in our throat; we are too feeble to cry; we cannot break the bonds, for we have no strength left; and what can be the end? Is it not to these that Divine Wisdom speaks, saying, "You have despised all my counsel, and have neglected my reprehensions; I also will laugh in your destruction, and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared" (Prov. i. 25, 26).

How different is the life of the devout communicant! It is not in his own strength that he lives, and not in his own strength that he grapples with the tempter. He has received Jesus Christ into his soul, there is a Divine light within him to show him more plainly the Will of God, and to warn him of the approaching temptation. There is a Divine strength with him, and in this strength he is more than conqueror over his foes. He can say with St. Paul: "I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. ii. 20). If the communicant fall, he is better able to rise again, and he will fall less frequently. The snares of sin have never been suffered to wind so fast about him, or so tightly, because at least at each good Communion they were broken, and he began once more to walk warily and faithfully in the way of life. When the end draws nigh, his first thought is to ask for Holy Communion to fortify him in his last struggle. "There is hope for thy last end, saith the Lord" (Jer. xxxi. 17).

Among the fruits of Holy Communion I mentioned that we thereby obtain an ineffable union with Christ. You know that the Church is called the Mystical Body of Christ, and that by our reception into the Church by Baptism we become members of His Body. He has chosen

to redeem us, not as so many separate atoms, but by uniting us into one body, of which He is the Heart and the Head. Of this union of the faithful there are many types given. The Church is called Christ's Body (Eph. i. 23), His Spouse (Eph. v. 23), His Temple (Eph. ii. 21), One Bread (1 Cor. x. 16), One Vine (John xv. 5), with many other similitudes, all speaking of the close union of the faithful, Christ being the bond of their union. By Him the multitude of the faithful are united together. All live by His life—all are governed by His will. As the beating of the heart stirs the pulses throughout the whole body, and sends life to its furthest extremities, so is the Will of Christ, His life, and His love imparted to the last and least member of His Mystical Body. The blood sent from the heart nourishes and supplies all the members; if the blood did not reach them, they would shrivel and die. In like manner the faithful are nourished and maintained in their union with Christ by Holy Communion. The food which we eat becomes part of our substance—it is one with us. By Holy Communion, similarly, we become one with Christ; we are said even to become "partakers of the Divine Nature" (2 Pet. i. 4). The union of the blessed in heaven with God is thus begun on earth, and if this union is maintained here, we shall surely enjoy it for all eternity.

Again, we are bidden to live a heavenly life here below, as the condition of living in heaven hereafter. It is impossible to suppose that one who in this life had no taste or care for heaven and heavenly things, would even enjoy heaven, if it were possible that he could be admitted into it. God would be terrible to Him, for He had never learnt to know or love Him; and, as the joy of the blessed consists in knowing and loving God, and being loved by Him, heaven itself would be a hell to him, for want of this. Of the faithful on earth, on the other hand, St. Paul says: "Our conversation is in heaven" (Phil. iii. 20). And again, "You are come"—that is, by your conversion—"to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. xii. 20). But we cannot rise to a heavenly life, to heavenly ideas, to heavenly purposes and heavenly

deeds, except by help from heaven. We can know nothing about heaven except from Divine enlightenment; and this is given us in the Blessed Sacrament. Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament is the Light of the world; He, and He only, who is in heaven, can direct our steps thitherward, inspire into our minds heavenly desires, and raise us, in short, to the level of a heavenly life. He, then, that will not approach Holy Communion thereby confesses that he has no desire to live a heavenly life. Of himself he cannot attain to it; and, the means being placed within his reach, he refuses to make use of them.

There are many excuses made by those who will not come to Communion, and some apparently quite opposite to one another. One man refrains because he is not worthy—another, because he can save his soul without it—a third, because he does not find those to be living better lives who often approach the Holy Table. Of these, the first is the only one which can ever be supposed to be genuine. In the beginning of the last century, a sect arose in France, which, from professed motives of reverence, invited men to abstain from Communion—even from their Easter Communion—because they did not feel worthy. Some would even postpone their Communion to their death-beds on the same false plea. No sooner, however, had the first echo of this heresy been heard at Rome, before the Father of Christendom denounced it in the strongest terms. It was a hateful device of the enemy to induce Christians to refrain from the food of their salvation from a false humility; and the Church's censures showed the heresy in its true light. Rebellion is no sign of humility, yet on the part of these heretics the voice of the Church only produced resistance. Moreover, under cover of that one error, many more crept in, as will always be the case when men resist the voice of the Church, and the result of this apparent humility was that thousands of souls were lost. A truly humble man, while acknowledging his unworthiness of the least of God's mercies, would yet approach the altar with the greatest confidence in His goodness, sure that our Lord was not, so to speak, laying snares for his soul,

to entrap it into an act of presumption; for, after all, where this false diffidence exists, it can be shown most evidently to spring from a false appreciation of the purpose of Holy Communion, and from want of confidence in God. Though the Blessed Sacrament be called the Bread of Angels, it is not reserved for the perfect, but intended especially for penitent sinners. It is a means, and the greatest and most necessary one, of grace. By it the sickness and infirmity of the soul are healed, and we cannot rise from our fallen state without the help therein afforded. The only requisite preparation for Holy Communion is a true and sincere confession of our sins, with a detestation of them, sealed by the sacrament of Penance; and, after that, we shall hardly be able to carry out our purposes of amendment without a devout Communion. He that thinks to amend his life first, and then approach the sacraments, is like one who should expect to recover from a dangerous illness without taking the necessary remedies, or one who, being faint with hunger, should refuse food until his hunger had passed away.

Of the third excuse, little need be said. It is made in bad faith. "Thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest" (Rom. ii. 1). To know whether another is better or worse, requires an insight into the conscience which is not granted to men; and, if another does not derive the benefit that might be expected from his Communions, it is certainly not the fault of the Most Holy Sacrament—which is the same, and offers the same graces to all—but the fault of the receiver, who must have approached without proper dispositions. It is enough to know for ourselves that, if we approach devoutly, we shall receive the greatest benefit from Holy Communion.

It will be seen that all that has been said will refer, not only to the one Communion which the Church absolutely requires at a particular season of the year, but to other and more frequent Communions. It is, to say the least, a perilous thing to content oneself with keeping within the bare limits of the Church's precepts, which cannot be transgressed without sin; and it shows a great coldness in our love to our Lord. Moreover, the seldomer we ap-

proach Holy Communion, the less fervently we are likely to do so, and thus we should not receive the same benefit by it. Whereas, the oftener we go, the more our fervour increases, being fed from its own proper source. And there is no limit set to the number of our Communions by our Lord or His Church, except the prudent advice of our confessor. St. Augustine, and many other fathers, teach us that when we pray for our daily bread, it is especially that heavenly bread which should be asked for, which was commonly received every day by the faithful in the early ages of the Church, and by many devout souls in every age. If we cannot receive so often, at least we should always be trying to increase the number of our Communions, and have the desire so to live that we might approach more frequently. Love must be fed from the fountain of love. We cannot love God without He gives the power of loving. And this is given when we receive in the Blessed Sacrament the Heart of Jesus, burning with love for men. Would that we could stir up in our cold hearts that devotion to the Blessed Sacrament which made St. Ignatius the martyr cry out of old: "I desire the Bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the Flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who in the latter days was made of the seed of David and of Abraham, and I desire the chalice of God, even His own Blood, which is incorruptible charity and eternal life" (Ep. ad Rom: § vii.).

It is, as we have all experience enough to testify, very difficult, in any case, to keep the thought of God always before our minds, and to set the interests of God in their proper place, paramount before all others. With the best purposes, and with frequent efforts, we find, nevertheless, that the world and its affairs are so near, and press so closely upon us, that it is almost impossible sometimes not to be carried away by them—impossible, that is, unless by a special grace we are able to resist their impetus, and to remember that, after all, we are living not for time, but eternity. Not that our duty does not require us to attend to worldly things, and by them to serve God; but this must be done for God's sake, and in His

service. But, in order to do so, we must have God in our hearts and before our eyes. The greater number of men have duties which keep them constantly engaged in occupations in no wise conducing in their nature to recollection; yet this recollection is necessary, if they would make progress to heaven, or even avoid sin. How many sins have we ourselves not committed through mere want of recollection? There are many means conducive to this recollection in the midst of engrossing occupations; but they all rest on a real, strong, earnest purpose to live for God, and to offer all our actions to Him. This purpose comes from God; it is His gift. No substitute for it will avail. We can deceive men; we can, and far too easily, deceive ourselves; but we cannot deceive God. But this purpose, as it is God's gift, so it requires God's assistance, to keep it alive and vigorous within our hearts.

I know no other means, no means which can effectually take the place of Holy Communion. In this God keeps alive the gifts and graces He has bestowed upon us. The saint has become a saint through his devout Communions. All the treasures in his soul have been laid up by these, for Jesus Christ is the only true treasure; and it is by Holy Communion that He becomes ours. If, having the opportunity, he were to neglect Holy Communion, all these treasures would pass out of his possession; for, in losing Jesus, he loses all that he has. Much more will he who has made but little progress in his sanctification, who is conscious, not only of a thousand shortcomings and a thousand infirmities, but of sinful habits not quelled, and actual sins daily committed, lose every chance of amendment, when he is careless of his Communions. The fierce heat of temptation beats upon him, and Jesus only can refresh him. The cold of indifference and worldliness numbs him, and Jesus only can cherish in him the fire of spiritual life. The weight of earthly care presses on him, and who can hold up that cross but Jesus? Grief and disappointment wound him, and crush him to the earth, and none but Jesus can heal the wound, and bring heaven back to his soul.

And when we say that Jesus is necessary to keep alive

in us the gifts which we have first received from Him, we say that Holy Communion is necessary for us; for it is by Holy Communion that we receive Jesus. If there be any other way known to men by which Jesus comes into the soul, and becomes one with us, by which our life is supplied by His life, and our infirmities supplied by His perfections, let us be free to choose that way; but, if not, let us be no longer cold and indifferent about our Communions. There is no other way; dear brethren, you know it well. Why, then, despise this, and peril your salvation by your indifference to God's best gift?

I must say one word about the manner in which we should receive Communion. It is not enough to communicate, or even to communicate frequently. We must also communicate devoutly. There are many frequent communicants who make but little progress; perhaps, at least apparently, not any. But, why is this? Certainly not from any want in the gift that they received, but only in the dispositions in which they receive it. If you wish to receive Holy Communion so as to derive from it its full fruits, you need to prepare yourself. Make acts of faith in the true presence of our Lord in this Holy Sacrament; of contrition for your many infidelities to Him; of humility, as acknowledging His greatness and goodness, compared with your own unworthiness; of hope and confidence, as expecting in this gift the fulfilment of what our Lord has promised through it, namely, eternal life; of love for Him who has so far loved you as to give Himself to be your food. And after Communion, while Jesus is yet within you, consider wherein you have failed hitherto, and offer your good resolutions for amendment in union with the Divine Victim whom you hold within you. If you eat with holy fervour and heavenly purpose, you will live by what you eat.

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXIII.

Fasting.

BY THE VERY REV. G. AKERS.

There is no precept of the Church, perhaps, about which there has been so much cavilling as that which commands to fast on certain days, and to abstain from flesh meat on certain others. It is not, perhaps, so much the abstract duty of fasting which is disputed. It would be hard to do this, for there are, perhaps, few duties so frequently inculcated both in the Old and New Testaments. But the prescribing the manner in which we are to fast, and the times when we are to do so, is met by a string of objections. A general duty, as an abstract principle, does not cost men much to acknowledge; but, when it touches a man's daily life by being pressed into practice, then the outcry and protest is plainly enough heard. To assent to a general principle does not cost us anything. To put it in practice requires a sacrifice, or a series of sacrifices, of our inclinations, and at this the fallen flesh rebels. But it is of the very essence of every useful law to put a restraint on men's unbridled inclinations, and there would be but little merit in an obedience which cost us no effort and no sacrifice. It is a test of the sincerity of our professions, and, if obeyed, will be the strengthening and securing of them (Rom. vi. 23). It is true that life everlasting is the grace or free gift of God. But it is so called, because God is not bound even to offer it, and, when offered, it infinitely exceeds the utmost efforts of man to attain it; not because He does not require something at our hands as the condition of salvation. Else our Lord would not have said: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the Commandments" (St. Matt.

xix. 17). There would be no difference between the sinner and the saint, between the just and the unjust.

Now, the great object of the Divine discipline, which we must submit to if we would be saved, is this, to subdue our unruly passions, and bring them again into subjection to the will, itself enlightened by faith, and subject to the will of God. At the Fall of man, as you know, his passions revolted against his will, because his will had committed an act of disobedience against God. Before the Fall, the will of man could control his appetites or passions, so that they should never transgress the limits of reason; and the very gravity of the Fall consisted in this: that he was not hurried to his act of disobedience by the blind impulse of passions which he could not resist. Fallen man, therefore, was in a state of captivity to his passions, which naturally thenceforward tended to evil. And as by his Fall he had forfeited the special assistance of God, he could not regain that empire over himself which should restore order to his being. But what he was unable to do for himself our Lord did for him, when, by His Sacred Passion, He conquered sin and hell, and with His Precious Blood poured into the Church the treasures of grace. In the state of grace thus made possible to us by the death of Christ, and into which we are introduced by the Sacrament of Baptism, we are able to subdue our passions. But, though we be able, it pleases God that it shall be done by a continued battle with them. We are destined after this life to a far nobler state than that in which unfallen man was when created, but we must fight our way to it through foes many and dangerous, the most dangerous among which is our fallen nature. Thus, our Lord says: "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force" (St. Matt. xi. 12). In that struggle God has promised to be with us, and however much He suffers us to be tempted, we need never fall into the temptation. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able" (1 Cor. x. 13). And though He Himself, being God, could not fall under the dominion of sin, yet our Lord Himself lived a life of

continued mortification and suffering, from His birth in the stable of Bethlehem to His death on the Cross of Calvary. And this to set us an example of that life of mortification by which alone we may hope to subdue the empire of sin within us.

But, before pursuing this theme farther, let us consider how ancient is this discipline of fasting. There never has been a time when man's obedience has not been tested by his abstaining from some indulgence. Even before the Fall, in the Garden of Paradise, there was one tree of the fruits of which he was forbidden to eat. After the Fall, we find sacrifice at once introduced, in which the best of the flock, which otherwise man might lawfully enjoy, was offered to God, and consumed by fire on the altar. Already, at the time of the Flood, we find the distinction existing between clean and unclean beasts, reminding us of the prohibition to eat the latter, in the law of Moses (Lev. xi.) When Moses went up into the mountain to receive the law, he was fasting for forty days, and in that law a solemn fast was prescribed annually on the Day of Atonement (Lev. xxiii. 27). Also, before the Pasch, for a week the people were to abstain from leavened bread. Many special acts of fasting are recorded, as when Josue and the elders of Israel fasted and prayed before the ark for a whole day, after their defeat before Hai (Jos. viii. 6). The Israelites, oppressed by the Philistines, fasted before the Lord at Masphah (1 Kings vii. 6). So we hear of David, Elias, the Ninevites even, who were pagans, Esther and the Jews in captivity, Ezechiel, and many others, fasting in token of humiliation, mourning for sin, and a desire to propitiate God.

In the New Testament, we find the disciples of St. John the Baptist trained in a discipline of severe abstinence, after the example of their master; and when the Jews complained of our Lord's disciples, that they did not fast, He replied to them, "Can you make the children of the bridegroom fast whilst the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, then shall they fast in those days" (St. Luke v. 34, 35).

Fasting, then, seems to have been taught from the beginning; and though, until the time of the Church, the law of abstinence was not precisely fixed, yet there never was a time when some form of self-denial regarding food was not practised by the people of God.

Bearing in mind what we have previously said with regard to the disordered condition of man after the Fall, and his need of a severe and continual self-discipline to repair its damage in his own soul, we can readily understand the reason of this. But there was another consequence of the Fall, besides the injuries done to the soul of man. As all creation had been made subject and subservient to him, so all creation suffered at his Fall, or, as we may say, fell with him. He no longer enjoyed an undisputed empire over it, nor could freely make use of it without fear. The serpent who lurked under the Tree of Knowledge was found also in hiding under many another fair creature, seeking, through it, to lure man to his ruin. He could no longer be sure that his reason would be able to restrain him from abusing God's gifts, as the tempter was always inviting him to do. Noe was ensnared by the fruit of the vine; Lot, by the fruitfulness of Sodom; the Israelites in the wilderness coveted the fleshpots of Egypt, and desired to return thither. And you will observe that it is not the things themselves desired which are unlawful, but the inordinate, or excessive, desire of them. These natural things are God's good gifts to man, which the Divine bounty created for his use, and desires that he should enjoy. In Paradise, all these good things, and perhaps more, were in his reach; but in Paradise he knew when, and how far, to use them temperately, and his appetite never impelled him to exceed that temperance. It became necessary after the Fall that he should curb and restrain his passions from their impulse to excess, sometimes refusing them what in itself was lawful, and always jealously watching lest they should lead him into sin. A wild beast is tamed by hunger and thirst, and is not trusted with fulness of food until it has shown itself perfectly obedient to its master.

Our life, then, is a perpetual combat, and a combat not only with enemies outside us, but with our own senses and passions within. For a soldier, rigid discipline is necessary, far more rigid than is requisite for those not engaged in warfare. If he has not learnt to obey the least signal of his leader, he is in danger of falling a prey to the enemy, and injuring the cause which he is bound to defend; moreover, in warfare, he has to undergo cheerfully a great many privations, from which if he shrink he can never be a good soldier. Our leader in the combat is Jesus Christ; the voice with which He speaks is that of the Church. And that voice proposes to us, as an essential part of her discipline, to observe days of fasting and abstinence. By a faithful observance of these, we are able to curb the appetites of the flesh. In one form or another, they occur very frequently. One day in each week is appointed for abstinence from flesh meat. Annually a season of forty days is set aside for fasting, and with the large exemptions granted in modern times, in consideration of human weakness, at least two days in each week of this time remain to be strictly observed. Other days, such as vigils and Ember days, occur also at certain intervals, so that the soul should never be allowed to sleep in security. They serve as the signals during the night watches in camp to keep the soldier mindful that the enemy is close at hand, and may attack him at any moment. We are reminded that it was by eating that our first parents fell, and in restraining that appetite we dispose ourselves better to restrain all the rest.

Moreover, as we are bound to keep ourselves in the proper attitude and dispositions to live a heavenly life, we must remember how much influence on the soul the body has. When it is heavy and sluggish, we are far less fit for spiritual exercises, and such sluggishness naturally arises from self-indulgence in food. The more we satisfy ourselves with material things, the more our very consciousness, and still more our desire, for heavenly things will vanish away. You remember the story of Dives. We hear of no great sin that he committed; it is not to warn us against what we are wont to call great sins that

our Lord related the parable. Simply, he lived in luxury and self-indulgence. He was wrapt up in self. The figure of Lazarus at his gates made no impression on him. We do not hear that he treated him cruelly. But he had no thought and no care for any life but the present. His sumptuous raiment, his splendid feasts, his riches, and the magnificence which surrounded him, and the crowd of flatterers which these attracted—these things filled his imagination, these were his delights. God and eternity, and that death which waited at his doors, were not in his mind, or, if he ever thought on them, it was as of far-off, dream-like sounds, hardly heard and not heeded, in the din and bustle of worldly pomp which surrounded him. And you know the end of all this. In a few short words our Lord tells the tale, but how awful those words are: "And the rich man died, and he was buried in hell" (St. Matt. xvi. 22). Look, on the other hand, at Lazarus. Again, apparently to keep our attention on this one matter—the benefit of a mortified life—we are not told of any of his virtues or great piety, which certainly he must have possessed. We are only told of him that he lay at the gate of Dives, full of sores, desiring to be filled with the crumbs that fell from the rich man's table, and no one did give him (St. Matt. xvi. 20, 21). But his end was that "he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom" (St. Matt. v. 22). In the want of all earthly consolation his heart was free to contemplate God, and, unrestrained by the bonds of fleshly appetites, to lift itself up to Him. And thus he grew in holiness, and obtained everlasting life. It was not his hunger and thirst, his want of all things desirable, that obtained him this reward. Many a beggar is lost for ever, because he does not accept his cross, but covets what God has been pleased to refuse him. It is because he accepted these as a gracious discipline from the hand of God, and used them to approach his Father and Creator. Yet we may learn from this that by such privations we are better able to serve God, being freer from the care of earthly things; and, in her maternal solicitude, our Mother the Church prescribes to all a moderate degree of them, thereby to enable us to do so.

And, after all, this small measure of self-denial which is imposed upon us, is but as a suggestion of far more which saints have willingly added to it in every age. Our pampered flesh shudders when we hear of the penances of the Fathers of the Desert, of their prolonged and almost continual fasts, and of the hard and scanty fare with which these were broken. Yet, by this self-discipline they attained to heights of holiness and a near communion with God which fill us with admiration. It must be ill, indeed, with us if we are loth, by such small privations as are prescribed, to take one step at least in the same direction, for it is the road to heaven. We know how much more precious the soul is than the body, yet we live too often as if the body were everything, and we leave the soul to take its chance. We are fretful and anxious about the smallest need of the body, but the soul may remain in want of what is most necessary to it, and we hardly give the matter a thought. Yet it is certain that no man can be admitted into heaven who has not practised self-denial here. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (St. Matt. x. 38).

But, besides the duty of self-discipline, there are other reasons why fasting is imperative on every good Christian. Let us remember the sins that we ourselves have committed. If one act of disobedience was punished so severely in Adam, what will be our fate, who sin daily, if, by a penitential life, we do not show at least our desire to make satisfaction and to amend? For every sin that we commit God will exact strict satisfaction, even to the uttermost farthing. And though it is indeed impossible for us to offer any adequate satisfaction for the injuries we have done to God's glory, yet, in union with the merits of Jesus Christ, we may, and are bound to, offer our feeble works of penance, which are accepted for His. It would be strange, indeed, if, while our Lord and Master lived a life of suffering, His disciples were to shrink from the least mortification; He, the sinless One, carrying His cross daily, and we, the sinners for whom He suffered, refusing even to touch it. Through His mercy there is

a purgatory for those who have not completed their penitential discipline here below; but can we hope that its doors will be open to those who have made no effort even to commence their penance in this life? Moreover, we know that the pains of purgatory are strict and severe beyond all expression, while the works done in the flesh are comparatively light and easy. And if we delay our penance here, especially as making light of the Church's Commandments, even if we are saved, we are laying up for ourselves a far more terrible penance beyond the grave. St. Paul, speaking of the life of penance both as a necessary self-discipline and as a satisfaction for sin, says, "I chastise my body, and bring it into subjection, lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 27). And if this great saint found such stern penance necessary for himself, what shall we say in excuse for our soft and self-pleasing lives? We sin daily, and with little compunction, and are ever laying up in store for ourselves a heavy account. How much heavier will not our judgment be, if we do nothing to exhibit our sorrow for those sins, and our earnest purpose to amend?

And, again, fasting is commonly, and rightly, called one of the wings of prayer. We read of Anna, the prophetess—she to whose failing eyes was granted to see the Light of the World, on His presentation in the temple—that she had been for many years, "by fastings and prayers, serving God night and day" (St. Luke ii. 37). Our prayers are not so strong or so fervent, that we can afford to dispense with any means within our power to make them more acceptable to God. And this forsaking of some small indulgence for a time is a very expressive means of showing that we are truly in earnest. Besides that, while fasting the mind is much clearer and more vigorous for all spiritual action. It is not after having taken food that we are fittest for devout contemplation. The heaviness and torpor which commonly follow after food confuse the mind and dull our devotion, if it do not destroy it.

But I have left to the last what ought to be the

weightiest motive with us—willingly and cheerfully to obey the Church's precept of fasting, and to desire rather to add to it of our own free will, than to fall short of what is commanded; and this is, the example of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ. And in two respects does this speak most powerfully to us—first, that Christ is, indeed, our example, as well as our Redeemer, and that whoever will be saved must follow in His steps; secondly, that the contemplation of His Passion and death should excite in all Christians, as it has always excited in His saints, an ardent sympathy and desire to suffer with Him.

Christ is our example. "Unto this you are called," says St. Peter, "because Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow His steps" (1 St. Peter ii. 21). He is called the Captain of our Salvation, not only because by the might of His Passion He conquered our enemies and achieved our salvation, but also because, as the captain marches at the head of his soldiers, leading them to battle, so does He lead us in the way of salvation, helping us to overcome the enemies which beset our path. Where He goes, we must go, and as He fights we must fight, if we hope to be saved. "He that taketh not up his cross and followeth me, is not worthy of me" (St. Matt. x. 38). Now, the life of Christ is a life of mortification and self-denial. He and His disciples are in want of all things; they live upon alms. He has not "where to lay His head" (St. Matt. viii. 20). He begins His life in the manger of a stable—He begins His ministry by a fast of forty days—He atones for the luxury and self-indulgence of the world by a rigid self-denial, and He certainly does not expect His disciples to fall back into that self-indulgence. If they follow Him, they abandon ease and comfort. When it was objected to Him, that He did not impose the same austerities upon His disciples, He replied, "Can the children of the marriage fast, as long as the Bridegroom is with them? . . . But the day will come when the Bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days" (St. Mark ii. 19), thus showing that the state of His disciples, after His Ascension, should be one of fasting.

When, however, we turn to the Passion of Christ, we must needs be amazed that any of His disciples should choose to live softly. The Lord of Glory has set aside His majesty and His power, and placed Himself in the hands of His wicked and rebellious creatures, choosing of His own free will, and without compulsion, to suffer at their hands, and to suffer a most cruel death. Every kind of torture and ignominy is heaped upon Him. His hands, which have dispersed benefits and wrought miracles, are cruelly bound, His back is lacerated with a most cruel scourging; His head pierced with sharp thorns from the crown which, in mockery, they have fastened on it; His face, which is the joy of angels to behold, and in the sight of which will consist the glory of the elect, is covered with blood, and shamefully spat upon. There is no whole part in His body. The people cry out for the release of a murderer, while they clamour for His crucifixion. He is laden with the heavy cross on which He is to die, and, weak and exhausted as He is with their ill-usage, He is driven with blows and threats to the hill of Calvary, where He is to be crucified. There He is exposed to fresh shame and fresh pain in the stripping of His garments, which adhere to His bleeding wounds, and at last the nails are driven into His hands and feet, by which He is to be suspended until He dies. He is crucified between two thieves, and confounded with them, as Isaias had prophesied. Who that gazes on this sight, and ponders over it, can desire any longer to take his ease? It is our Friend, our Saviour, our God, who thus suffers; and it is for us that He suffers. As truly as if we had been present at that time, and had lent our aid to the malefactors who crucified Him, are we guilty of His death. For it is our sins which caused it. And yet, it is to deliver us from those sins, and from the judgment of God which awaits them, that He suffered and died. There was not one small part of that agony which He endured, which He did not choose willingly to endure (for it is His will which controls the world); and He chose them, because He could thereby exhibit to us His love, and ransom us from sin and hell. Who would feast when a

dear friend lay dying; and, still more, when that friend had given himself to die to save us from death? And who dare grudge those light penances whereby the Church seeks to keep before our eyes the image of our crucified God, and to print on our minds and hearts the record of what His love has done for us? "I judged not myself," says St. Paul, "to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified" (1 Cor. ii. 2). The true Christian has Jesus Christ and His Passion always in mind, and always at heart.

Man is created to rule, and destined to an exalted condition in the life to come. "Thou madest him a little lower than the angels, Thou didst crown him with glory and honour" (Ps. viii. 6). But before he can reach this glory and dominion he must regain his lost dominion over himself. Self-will, and a false idea of independence, together with the attractions of self-indulgence, forfeited for him the liberty in which he was made, and substituted for it that servitude to his passions which we see throughout the world. In order, then, to regain and to secure to himself for eternity the "glorious liberty of the children of God," his will must once more freely subject itself to the will of God. He must understand that his God is a Master "whom to serve is to reign," and, setting aside all illusions, set himself to reduce his whole nature to that honourable servitude to his Divine Master, to whom He is dedicated. When the will is thus in subjection to the Divine will, grace will enable it once more to regain the mastery over his revolted passions. The great St. Francis called his body a beast of burthen, and treated it as such, and thereby rose to so exalted a height of sanctity. Yet the very body itself is ennobled by such service, and is to share the privileges of the soul when it has triumphed over the lower nature.

It is true that by himself man may not be able to obtain this perfect mastery over himself, but the grace of God makes it possible. "I can do all things," says St. Paul, "through Christ, who strengtheneth me." And, moreover, though the way to obtain this necessary vic-

tory over self seems rough and thorny, yet it brings, as the common experience of the saints testifies to us, a peace and a pleasure incomparably greater than any that can be obtained by self-indulgence. When St. Teresa cries, "Lord, let me either suffer or die," it is not because suffering in its own nature is sweet to her any more than it would be to us, but because she had learnt that thus to suffer brought her into a closer union with our Lord, far sweeter than all the pleasures she could sacrifice for it, and more than worth the cost of all the pain that she could endure. It is through a false and short-sighted calculation, or rather for want of any, that man is frightened away from that which would make his happiness, and persuaded to that which will work his woe. And the more he yields himself to the mere satisfaction of his appetites, the more incapable he becomes of any nobler aim, or of any juster consideration of what will constitute his true welfare.

To sum up, then, the motives we have to observe fasting and abstinence, according to the Church's commands, are—to reduce to obedience our unruly passions by wholesome mortification; the universality and antiquity of this precept, the temptations which lie hidden under the good gifts of God when used without self-restraint, the example of our Lord, and of His saints, and, above all, a true sympathy with His life and death of suffering. The heart must be cold, and the judgment blind, which can set aside such powerful motives for a passing pleasure, and in face of a terrible danger. Do not live in the present, my dear brethren, but keep eternity before you, and you will desire the discipline which you have feared, and fear the unrestrained indulgence which you have desired. Hear and obey the words of our Divine Master: "Take up my yoke upon you, and learn of me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is sweet, and my burthen light" (St. Matt. xi. 29, 30).

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXIV.

Jesus Suffering.

"Jesus Christ hath been set forth, crucified among you" (Gal. iii. 1).

Every detail of our Lord's life, my dear brethren, was written for our instruction, that we might make Him our model; but the history of His Passion brings before us, at once, all the highest and most perfect teaching of His life. St. Paul says of himself: "I judged not myself to know anything among you but Jesus Christ, and Him crucified," as much as to say that Jesus crucified is the one complete and sufficient lesson that Christians have to learn. The Passion of Christ was the book of the saints, in which they found solace in trouble, and encouragement in danger; from it they learned how to pass through the trials and temptations of life, and how to die.

In the Passion, our Lord gives Himself to us entirely. He gives up His body and His soul, and all the sufferings which He endured, to be our solace and refreshment, that, by His suffering, He might overcome ours. This is beautifully expressed in the words of St. Ignatius:

Anima Christi sanctifica me, corpus Christi salva me, sanguis Christi, inebria me, aqua lateris Christi lava me, passio Christi comforta me.

Soul of my Saviour, sanctify my breast;
Body of Christ, be Thou my saving guest;
Blood of my Saviour, bathe me in Thy tide;
Wash me, ye waters, gushing from His side.

Since our Lord does all this for us in His Passion, the least we can do is to take His sufferings to heart, to meditate upon them, and make them the learning which we value most.

The fourth article of the Creed treats of our Lord's Passion; it is: "Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried." The Catechism says: "The

chief sufferings of Christ were: *First*, His agony and sweat of blood in the garden; *secondly*, His being scourged at the pillar, and crowned with thorns; and, *thirdly*, His carrying His cross, His crucifixion, and His death between two thieves." "These sufferings are called the Passion of Jesus Christ," and "our Saviour suffered to atone for our sins, and to purchase for us eternal life."

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate." Amongst all who were concerned in our Lord's death—Judas the traitor, the Scribes and Pharisees who delivered Him up through envy, Annas and Caiphas who first condemned Him to die—Pilate is the only one whose name appears in the Creed. His name points to the fulfilment of prophecy. It had been written: "The sceptre shall not be taken away from Juda, nor a ruler from his thigh, till He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations" (Gen. xlix. 10). The long line of rulers—of judges, and kings, and priests—who had in turn governed the people of God, is now over, and Pontius Pilate, the Roman Governor, sits and judges in their place. The sceptre has passed away from Juda, and a stranger alone has the power to pass sentence of death. Let us hear the Jews themselves confess it: "Pilate saith to them: Shall I crucify your King? the chief priests answered: We have no king but Cæsar" (St. John xix. 10). By these words they at once reject Him who is sent to rule over them, and admit that the time has come when He was to be sent.

The Passion of our Lord is described to us in detail in the Five Sorrowful Mysteries, which correspond with the answer of the Catechism above quoted. They are: 1. The Agony in the Garden. 2. The Scourging at the Pillar. 3. The Crowning with Thorns. 4. The Carrying of the Cross. 5. The Crucifixion. Under these heads come all the details of our Lord's sufferings. These mysteries have so often been made the subject of sermons and meditations, that I will only mention a few points on which the mind may rest when you recite the Rosary. We say ten Hail Marys, and repeat, ten times, the words, "Blessed be the fruit of thy womb, Jesus." It is well to

have before our eyes incidents of the Passion, and details of the loving kindness and patient suffering of Jesus, to give a point and weight to these words as we pronounce them.

"And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to Mount Olivet. Then Jesus saith to them: All you shall be scandalized in me this night. For it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be dispersed. But after I shall be risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. And Peter, answering, said to Him: Though all shall be scandalized in Thee, I will never be scandalized. Jesus saith to him: Amen I say to thee, that in this night, before the cock crow, thou wilt deny me thrice. Peter saith to Him: Though I should die with Thee, I will not deny Thee. And in like manner said all the disciples. And Jesus came with them to a country place which is called Gethsemane, and He said to His disciples, Sit you here till I go yonder and pray. And taking with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, He began to grow sorrowful, and to be sad. Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death, stay you here and watch with me. And going a little further, He fell upon His face praying, and saying, Oh, my Father, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

"And there appeared an angel from heaven strengthening Him. And being in an agony, He prayed the longer. And His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground." "And He cometh to His disciples, and findeth them asleep, and He saith to Peter, What, could you not watch one hour with me? Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation. The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh weak. And again He prayed, saying, My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done. And He cometh again and findeth them asleep, for their eyes were heavy. And leaving them, He went away again, and He prayed the third time, saying the same words. Then He cometh to His disciples, and saith to them, Sleep on now and take your rest; behold, the hour is at hand, and the

Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go; behold, he is at hand that will betray me" (St. Matt. xxvi. 30; St. Luke xxii. 43).

Such is the history of our Lord's Agony in the garden, as told by the evangelists. It is the beginning of the Passion, and, as we may say, the connecting link between the Holy Eucharist and Mount Calvary. We cannot but remember that He went out into the garden as He rose from the last supper; that He had just fulfilled the ancient Paschal rite, and instituted the sacrifice of the New Law; and that the apostles followed Him fresh from their first Communion, with His words still lingering in their ears. In the garden, too, He opens to us His heart, and shows us all the pain and bitterness with which His soul is filled. His was not a mere outward suffering, but one which took possession of His whole human nature, as with a torrent of bitterness. Once again, when the end draws nigh, He calls our attention to the suffering of His inward heart by the words, "My God, my God, why hast Thou abandoned me?" At all other times of His Passion He displays to us only that calm, gentle patience which is to be the model for Christians in times of trial.

Let us follow in spirit with the disciples, and see our Lord beginning His Passion in that dark, silent Garden of Olives, far removed from the haunts of men. How different from the scene in which it was to close on Mount Calvary, in the midst of a multitude, watched by His enemies, and insulted by the crowd! As you say the Our Father, think of the perfect sacrifice which Jesus made of Himself for the glory of God—the complete offering up of His will to the will of His Eternal Father, and join with Him in the petition, "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

You turn, then, to Blessed Mary, and with her contemplate the mental sufferings of her Divine Son, which she could understand, and in which she sympathized more than any other created being. She was not then to behold our Lord in the Garden of Olives, but she was with Him in spirit, as we wish to be, and she laid up His words in her heart, as we desire to do, and we say to

her again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of Thy womb, Jesus." "My soul is sorrowful even unto death." Blessed is He for that bitter sorrow which He allowed thus to take possession of Him, by which He would take away from us the bitterness of mental anguish. He does not disdain our society, in the midst of His mortal conflict, but calls upon us to watch with Him. "Stay you here and watch with me." Blessed is He who thus asks us to take part in His sorrow, and promises to share ours, if only we allow Him to do so.

"Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." "Who in the days of His flesh, with a strong cry and tears, offering up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him from death, was heard for His reverence" (Heb. v. 7). Are we not to bless Him for the strong cry and bitter tears which He offered for us in the garden—tears for our sins and the dreadful punishment of sin—tears which were to "become to all that obey Him the cause of eternal salvation"?

Next come His words of gentle reproach—the words which He spoke to His apostles, but which every one of us may feel as said to himself, since he has deserved them a thousand times. "Could you not watch with me for one hour?" Our Lord watched for us and prayed for us. We read of Him spending the night in prayer, and on this last night of His mortal life, "being in an agony, He prayed the longer," and His prayer was all for us and for our salvation; and yet how often do we grudge Him even a few minutes! In His Divine charity, He makes excuses for us, as He did for His apostles. "The spirit, indeed, is willing, but the flesh is weak;" but can we make any excuse for ourselves?

And now the end of His agony approaches. He has watched and prayed, and now the moment for action has come. "Arise, let us go; behold, he is at hand that will betray me," and He goes forth to meet the traitor. He did not need to prepare Himself for the time of trial, but He knew that we did, and He shows us how we are to make ready for the hour of danger and temptation. If,

after His blessed example, we will humble ourselves before God, and pray with Him, we, too, shall be able to rise from our weakness, and go forth bravely to meet our trials, as He did.

"Friend, wherefore art thou come?" These are the words with which He addresses the traitor. May we not sometimes fancy these words addressed to ourselves? If we enter carelessly into His presence—as people do when they kneel down to pray in a thoughtless and dissipated manner, or enter into the church without seeming to give any heed of His presence—does it not seem as if He said to us as He did to Judas: "Friend, wherefore art thou come?" Is it, indeed, to adore and worship and love? Does it not look sometimes as if we rather came to betray Him?

"And Jesus said to the chief priests and magistrates of the temple, and the ancients that were come unto Him, Are you come out, as it were, against a thief, with swords and clubs? When I was daily with you in the temple, you did not stretch forth your hands against me; but this is your hour and the power of darkness. And apprehending Him, they led Him to the high priest's house" (St. Luke xxiii. 52). We can conclude the consideration of our Lord's agony by thinking of the pain and humiliation of that night, when Jesus was dragged through the streets of Jerusalem by armed men, amidst the shouts of the people. May we not say again and again, "Blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus"? May we not well try, as we think of this night, to comfort our Blessed Mother, by praising and loving Him who has suffered so much for us?

In the scourging at the pillar, we seem to have put before us, in a special manner, the personal degradation and insult which our Lord chose to bear, as the fitting punishment for sin. He would show us that sin is a foul blot by which the immortal soul is defiled and dishonoured—that is, a stain which remains upon us until it is washed away by sorrow and suffering. Therefore, He allowed the dignity of His sacred Person to be outraged by cruel blows, and still more cruel insults. "And

when He had said these things, one of the servants gave Jesus a blow, saying, Answerest Thou the high priest so?" "And the men that held Him mocked Him and struck Him. And they blindfolded Him, and smote His face. And they asked Him, saying, Prophesy who it is that struck Thee? And blaspheming, many other things they said against Him." "And some began to spit on Him, and cover His face, and to buffet Him, and to say unto Him, Prophesy, and the servants struck Him with the palms of their hands" (St. John xviii. 22; St. Luke xxii. 63; St. Mark xiv. 65).

"It is your hour and the power of darkness." Our Lord gave Himself to the will of the rabble around, and allowed Himself to be struck in the face, and even publicly in the presence of the high priest to be struck by a servant. But this was not enough; He must be formally sentenced to the lash, and this even when His innocence is manifest. Pilate says: "Behold, I, having examined Him before you, find no cause in this man in these things wherein you accuse Him. No, nor Herod neither, for I sent you to Him, and behold nothing worthy of death is done to Him. I will chastize Him, therefore, and release Him" (St. Luke xxiii. 14).

"I find no cause in those things wherein you accuse Him." Where, then, is the cause for the cruel scourging which He is to endure? We must look for it in the degradation of our sins which He has taken on Himself. "The Lord hath laid upon Him the iniquity of us all." "Who, His ownself, bore our sins in His body upon the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to justice: by whose stripes you were healed" (Isaias liii. 5; 1 St. Peter ii. 24). As you meditate on this Mystery, then, my dear brethren, follow our Lord in spirit to the hall of the scourging, and see Him fast bound to the pillar, and count the blows which fall thick on His Sacred Body: learn the hatefulness of the sins of men, and think of the part which your sins have in the cruel insult and torture He is suffering—and still more, let your heart warm to Him who was thus "wounded for your iniquities and bruised for your sins." Think how the scourges must have fallen on

the heart of Mary, and say to her, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus."

If the scourging brings before us the personal humiliation which our Lord suffered, His crowning with thorns displays to us His utter rejection by His own people, and the mockery which was heaped upon Him. He was a King, indeed! then they would make Him a King, and crown Him. "Then the soldiers of the governor, taking Jesus into the hall, gathered together unto Him the whole band, and stripping Him, they put a scarlet cloak about Him, and platting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And, bowing the knee before Him, they mocked Him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews. And spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head" (St. Matt. xxvii. 27). "Pilate, therefore, went forth again: Behold, I bring Him forth unto you, that you may know that I find no cause in Him (Jesus therefore came forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple garment), and he saith to them: Behold the Man! When the chief priests, therefore, and the servants had seen Him, they cried out, saying: Crucify Him, crucify Him" (St. John xix. 4).

St. Bernard says: "Let sinners gaze upon Him in His crown of sorrow, the crown of thorns, and let the pricks thereof enter into themselves. Let the daughters of Zion, the souls that love Him, gaze upon Him in His crown of mercy and follow in His steps. The wicked shall gaze upon Him in His crown of righteousness, and they shall perish. The saints shall gaze upon Him in His crown of glory, and they shall be blessed for ever. Others also that have followed Him shall be crowned after Him by that earnest working by the help of His grace" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

"Behold the Man!" Our Lord was presented to His people and rejected by them. He appeared to them in the guise of humility and sorrow, and they scorned Him. If this same Lord had come before them as a mighty King, with His hands full of gifts, how differently would they have received Him! If this crown of thorns had

been changed for His crown of glory, and the purple garment had become the triumphal robe of a conqueror, the world would have bowed before Him; but men could not endure Him in His crown of thorns.

"The Lord hath said to me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee. Ask of me and I will give Thee the Gentiles for Thy inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt rule them with a rod of iron, and shalt break them in pieces as a potter's vessel" (Ps. ii. 7). That reed which our Lord held in His hand, which seemed to men the sign of His weakness, was in reality more powerful than all the sceptres of kings; but the world knew Him not, and rejected and scorned Him.

As it did then it does now, and we, my dear brethren, who live in the midst of the world, are in danger of being led away by its judgment, and despising the simplicity and poverty of the cross. In this mystery of our Lord's crowning with thorns, let us accept Him as our King—as the King whose kingdom is not of this world—as the King of humility and poverty, whose weakness is mightier than all the powers of earth, and whose poverty is richer than all the wealth of earthly kings. Let us, then, look at our Lord, as He "comes forth, bearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe;" look at the Sacred Head, atoning, by its countless wounds, for the haughtiness and vanity of man, and take to heart the lesson of humility it teaches us. Let us "look on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of Faith, who, having joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame, and now sitteth on the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. xii. 2). We must choose Him as our King, crowned with thorns, and so we shall be worthy to follow Him in that day when the thorns shall be turned into glory, and "the Lord of Hosts shall be a crown of glory and a garland of joy to His people" (Isaias xxviii. 5).

The "carrying of the cross" represents to us the weariness of the Passion. In the scourging, Jesus is outraged; in the crowning with thorns, He is rejected and scorned; but, carrying His cross, He is patient under a cruel and

heavy burden. As you meditate on it, think, my dear brethren, of the unutterable weariness and exhaustion which our Lord suffered in His Passion. Jesus had spent the long night before His crucifixion—the first part, in mental anguish, and afterwards hurried backwards and forwards through the streets of Jerusalem, from one tribunal to another.

"Then the band and the tribune and the servants of the Jews took Jesus and bound Him, and they led Him away to Annas first, for he was father-in-law to Caiphas, who was the high priest of that year. Now, Caiphas was he who had given the counsel to the Jews—that it was expedient that one man should die for the people . . . and Annas sent Him bound to Caiphas, the high priest. . . . Then they led Jesus from Caiphas to the governor's hall. And it was morning; and they went not into the hall, that they might not be defiled, but that they might eat the Pasch" (St. John xviii. 13; xxiv. 28).

To Annas, to Caiphas, to Herod, and to Pilate—how weary and exhausted was this Blessed Lord! Think of the blood which He had poured out, and the toil and pain He had gone through, when, at last, He stood, faint and exhausted, before Pilate's judgment-seat, to receive sentence. "Pilate saith to them, What shall I do, then, with Jesus, who is called the Christ? They say all, Let Him be crucified. The governor saith to them, What evil hath He done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let Him be crucified. And Pilate, seeing that he prevailed nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, taking water, washed his hands before the people, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just man; look you to it. And the whole people, answering, said, His blood be upon us and upon our children. Then he released to them Barabbas, and, having scourged Jesus, delivered Him unto them to be crucified" (St. Matt. xxvii. 22).

And now that heavy cross on which He was to suffer was brought out and laid upon Him. He had already taken up the burden of the sins of men, and He lovingly and patiently accepted the heavy cross, which was its external emblem, "and bearing His own cross," St. John tells us,

"He went forth to that place which is called Calvary, but in Hebrew Golgotha" (St. John xix. 17). We have all, my dear brethren, meditated frequently on this last painful journey which our Lord undertook for us—on His three falls under the weight of His cross, and all the other incidents that occurred. Does it not place before our eyes the most perfect model of patient perseverance that man can have? We see our Lord struggling on, in spite of pain and weariness, in spite of exhaustion and loss of blood, till His course on earth is ended. Is not this to give us courage to fight bravely against the weariness which besets us in this mortal life? "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me." Our Lord bore this heavy cross that He might call upon us to take courage, and be patient, however severe the burden laid upon us might be.

And now we come to the last of these Sorrowful Mysteries—the Crucifixion. In this we have before us the complete self-sacrifice of the Passion. "He was offered because He Himself willed it"—and He reserves nothing for Himself. He offers His limbs to be nailed to the cross. "They have dug my hands and feet, they have numbered all my bones . . . they parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture they cast lots" (Ps. xxi. 17). He gives His Body to be raised up in the sight of His people: "I have spread forth my hands all the day long to an unbelieving people." He gives His side to be pierced with a lance, and His Precious Blood to be poured forth for the salvation of men. Could any sacrifice be more complete? "What is there more that I ought to do to my vineyard that I have not done?" (Isaias v. 4).

"And they that passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, and saying: Vah, Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thine own self; if Thou be Son of God, come down from the cross. . . . Now, from the sixth hour there was darkness over the whole earth until the ninth hour; and about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice,

saying: Eli, Eli, lamma sabacathani—that is, My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me? And some that stood there and heard, said: This Man calleth Elias. And immediately, one of them, running, took a sponge and filled it with vinegar: and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink. And the others said: Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to deliver Him. And Jesus, again crying with a loud voice, yielded up the Ghost. And, behold, the veil of the Temple was rent in two, from the top even to the bottom, and the earth quaked and rocks were rent: and there stood by the cross of Jesus His Mother, and His Mother's sister, and Mary Magdalen." It is with these, my dear brethren, that we must take our stand. Let us ponder on the details of our Lord's three hours, in sympathy with the tender loving heart of Mary, and learn that lesson of self-sacrifice which Jesus is teaching us from His cross. "It is consummated." Our Lord has done everything that infinite love and mercy could do for us, and what have we done for Him?

Sancta Mater istud agas
Crucifixi fige plagas
Cordi meo valide.

Holy Mother! pierce me through,
In my heart each wound renew
Of my Saviour crucified.

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXV.

The Glorious Life.

"There hath stood one in the midst of you, whom you know not" (St. John i. 26).

We have gone through the history of our Lord's Passion, and thought of all He suffered in body and mind. He seems like to us in all things; but in Him, my brethren, there is another life which we know not, and even in the moment of His supreme desolation and anguish, He is the Judge of the living and the dead, and has in His hands all power and glory. Travellers tell us how they see and touch the trunks of the great trees in the dim light of the tropical forests; but their summits are far away, lost to sight, in a sea of verdure and glare of sunlight, high above their heads; so all the details of the life and death of Jesus are put before us, and we seem to know Him; but "His magnificence is elevated above the heavens" (Ps. viii. 2), and the heart of man cannot fancy the glorious life which belongs to Him, of which He has come to make us partakers. Even when we seem to be most familiar, He is "One in the midst of us, whom we know not."

In explaining the Fifth Article of the Creed, the Catechism says: "By the words, 'He descended into hell,' I mean that, as soon as Christ was dead, His Blessed Soul went down into that part of hell called Limbo;" and "By Limbo, I mean a place of rest, where the souls of the just who died before Christ were detained." "They were detained in Limbo because they could not go up to the kingdom of heaven till Christ had opened it for them." Our Lord was to make His triumphal entry into heaven, surrounded by those souls whom He had redeemed. The just and holy men, the faithful servants

of the Lord, who had so long been in "Abraham's bosom," were to be the first fruits of the victory of the cross, and the first to take possession of the glory which had been purchased for men. "Lift up your gates, O ye princes, and be ye lifted up, O eternal gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in." And this "King of Glory, the Lord who is strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battles" (Ps. xxiii. 7), did not enter in unattended; but was accompanied by a vast train of liberated captives, since He "had ascended on high, and led captivity captive."

But the Lord would not wait till the day of His formal triumph had come; He went at once to gladden the hearts of those who were expecting Him, and filled with His brightness the place of rest in which they had so long reposed. "In which also coming, He preached to those spirits that were in prison" (1 St. Peter iii. 19), on which St. Cyril says: "Rightly did He say, 'It is finished.' But He was come to be the Lord of the dead as well as the living, and the hour was now calling Him to go and preach to the imprisoned spirits of the lower world." He bowed down His head and died, not only to atone for our sins, but because the spirits of the just were calling Him to come to their aid. Let us fancy how great was the joy in that place of captivity, when He appeared; the long delay and expectation were forgotten. Lovingly they greeted Him, and gratefully they thanked Him, and "in His light they saw the light"—the light of glory, which was never to be taken away from them. It will be so with us, one day, we hope, my dear brethren, when the days of exile are ended, and, perhaps, a time of punishment and reparation is past. Then our Lord will come to us as our Deliverer, to comfort us, as He did those faithful souls, and introduce us into His kingdom. Oh, how beautiful will He then be to our eyes!

The glorious life of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the glorious life which He has prepared for His faithful, is put before us in the Five Glorious Mysteries. These are: 1. The Resurrection; 2. The Ascension; 3. The Descent of the Holy Ghost; 4. The Assumption; 5.

The Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Of the three first I need say but little now, because I spoke of them at some length at Easter-time and Pentecost, so I will merely name a few of the thoughts which each feast presents.

The Resurrection is specially the mystery of faith; in it our Lord puts before us the glorious life which He has assumed. It was the miracle to which He again and again referred as the great evidence of His Divinity: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again"—"I lay down my life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from me; but I lay it down of myself, and I have power to lay it down; and I have power to take it again" (St. John x. 17).

In this mystery we can fancy our Lord coming to us, as He did to His apostles, when He "came and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be to you," and showed them His hands and His side. We may well meditate, as we say the prayers, on His victory over all His enemies; how His Divine power has put all things under His feet, "raising Him up from the dead, and setting on His right hand, above all principality, and power, and virtue, and domination, and every name that is named . . . and subjected all things under His feet." We must think of the qualities of the glorified Body which He has raised from the dead, as the example of that change "when this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1. Cor. xv. 53)—of the gift of peace which He has brought to us as the first fruits—that "peace which the world cannot give."

We may think, also, of our Lord's special tenderness to penitent sinners, as shown in His kindness to St. Mary Magdalen; and of the lesson of perseverance which He gives us in His resurrection, since "Christ rising from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him, for in that he died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth to God" (Rom. vi. 10). The holy women, too, come before us with their offerings, as "very early in the morning they came to the sepulchre, bringing the spices they had prepared" (St.

Luke xxiv. 1). And we may well join with them in making our choicest offerings to Jesus risen.

The Ascension is the mystery of hope—since our Lord goes before us to prepare for us a place where we, too, may enjoy that glorious life with which He is now clothed. We may fancy ourselves present with the infant Church on Mount Olivet, and listen with them to His last words—words of reproach for their "incredulity and hardness of heart," and words of encouragement: we may beg for our share of that last blessing which He left with His Church as, "lifting up His hands, He blessed them. And it came to pass, whilst He blessed them, He departed from them, and was carried up to heaven" (St. Luke xxiv. 50).

We have to think, too, in this Mystery, of the last glorious vision which the apostles had of their Master: how beautiful He appeared to them as He "rose above all the heavens"—and of the glory of His triumphant entry into the kingdom of heaven, surrounded by the countless host of souls whom He had redeemed.

But He went to prepare a place in which there was to be room for all: "In my Father's house there are many mansions;" and when we meditate on His triumphant entry, we cannot help thinking also of the place prepared for ourselves, and how we are to get there, and also of the angel's words to the apostles: "Why stand you looking up into heaven; this Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts i. 11). We can make this meditation in union with Blessed Mary, since she was the centre of that Church on earth which gazed up after Him with such fond and longing eyes; and we may well say to her, "Blessed art thou amongst women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb Jesus."

In the third Glorious Mystery—the Descent of the Holy Ghost—charity is the virtue specially put before us: the Holy Ghost is the Love of the Father and the Son, and "the charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us" (Rom. v. 5). The glorious life of Christ is made manifest by the coming

down of the Holy Spirit: His grace, poured into the hearts of the apostles, raised them to a new and supernatural life on earth, which was the beginning of the glorious life which was to be theirs in heaven. In spirit we may enter into that "upper chamber," which was, in a certain sense, the birthplace of the Catholic Church, and think of the ardent longing and expectation which filled the hearts of the apostles, as they waited for the day of Pentecost, and prepared themselves for its graces: "For John, indeed, baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. . . . . You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth" (Acts i. 5, 8).

Who was this Holy Ghost? He was the Paraclete, or Comforter, whom our Lord had promised to them to abide with them for ever, and teach them all truth: "But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, He will teach you all things, and bring all things to your mind, whatsoever I shall have said to you" (St. John xiv. 26).

The sixth article of the Creed speaks of the Holy Ghost, and teaches the Catholic faith concerning Him. "The Holy Ghost is the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity," who "proceeds from the Father and the Son," and "is equal to the Father and the Son, for He is the same Lord and God as they are." "The Holy Ghost came down on the apostles on Whit Sunday, in the form of parted tongues, as it were, of fire, to confirm their faith, to sanctify them, and to enable them to found the Church." The same faith is expressed in the Nicene Creed in these words: "And I believe in the Holy Ghost, the Lord and life-giver, who proceedeth from the Father and the Son, who, together with the Father and the Son, is adored and glorified: who spoke by the prophets."

The apostles spent ten days in prayer with the Blessed Virgin in the midst of them, preparing for the coming down of this Holy Spirit, the true and living God, into their breasts. We can fancy how perfect was their pre-

paration to receive His gifts, since their preparation corresponded to the fulness of the Divine Spirit they were to receive. Our meditation on the mystery is to be, at the same time, a prayer that our hearts may be ready for the grace of God that is to be bestowed upon us. "Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death"—pray for us, beyond all other things, that we may know how to receive and correspond with the grace which God will give us in the day of trial and temptation.

We must think of the "parted tongues, as it were, of fire" as the symbol of the enlightening, warming grace of God, which produced such wonderful effects in the hearts of the apostles, and, spreading from them through the Church of God, has made itself felt in every age, giving fertility to the cold hearts of men, and eloquence to the tongues of those that want utterance, and courage and strength to the hands of the feeble, to do great things for the glory of God. "The Spirit of the Lord hath filled the whole earth, and that which containeth all things hath knowledge of the voice" (Wis. i. 7). Such, my dear brethren, are some of the thoughts on which it is well to ponder as we say these Glorious Mysteries.

I now come to the fourth and fifth Glorious Mysteries —the Assumption and the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin. In the earlier mysteries the glorious life of our Lord Himself was put before us, but in these later ones we have to think of this same glorious life as shared in by His creatures; in the example of the Blessed Mother of God—the greatest and most perfect of all His creatures. Her Assumption is the pattern of a happy death, by which we are led on to think of death as the gate of the glorious life; and in her coronation we have before us, as a subject of meditation, the incorruptible crown prepared for those who are faithful—the "eternal weight of glory."

Our Lady's Assumption is the greatest of all her feasts, and the only one observed as a holiday of obligation. It is celebrated on the 15th of August and the ensuing week, so that, at the present moment, the Church

office is full of it; and day after day we hear the words: *Hodie Maria virgo cœlos ascendit, gaudete quia cum Christo regnat in æternum*—"This day the Virgin Mary ascends into heaven; rejoice that she reigneth for ever with Christ." It is the greatest of her feasts, because it is the conclusion of her labours and sufferings, and casts a brightness over all that has gone before. Her Divine Son seems to say to her with the Spouse in the Canticles: "Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one, and come. For winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land, the time of pruning is come: the voice of the turtle is heard in our land: arise, my love, my beautiful one, and come."

A devotion to the Blessed Virgin is one of the conspicuous marks of the Catholic Church. Mary herself prophesied that it should be so in the words of her *Magnificat:* "He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed, because He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name" (St. Luke i. 43). These words have been literally carried out in the Church of her Divine Son, and every age has given her some fresh title of benediction, because every age has brought out more fully the grandeur and the privileges contained in her title of Mother of God. As devotion to Mary is a distinguishing sign of the Church of Christ, so is it a token of a good Catholic. I do not mean that all good Catholics display their devotion in the same way, or that all make it equally conspicuous; but, I think it may safely be said that every good Catholic must really be devout to the Blessed Virgin, and that the more devout we are to her, the more surely are we in the way of salvation.

The Assumption is the happy death of the Most Blessed Mother of God. She was left, according to tradition, many years on earth after her Divine Son had ascended to heaven, that she might be a nursing mother to the Christian Church. God had chosen to bring about His Incarnation by her means, and to give salvation to men by her instrumentality and co-operation; we

can understand, therefore, that He willed her to be also His instrument in establishing that Church by which the Incarnation was to be preached to men, and its benefits handed on to the end of time. These years on earth were to our Blessed Mother years of exile. "Where your treasure is, there also you heart will be," our Lord tells us, and her heart and affections were with her Son at the right hand of God. If St. Paul, and, after him, all the saints of God, have been ready to exclaim, "I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ," we can understand how intense the longing of that Holy Mother must have been to leave the barren desert of this earth, and to join Him to part no more. But she was in this, as in all things, the "handmaid of the Lord," and she waited in perfect patience for His good time. At last the hour came when she was to die. "The winter is past; arise, my beloved, and come." Such to her was the summons of death.

St. John Damascene gives an account of our Lady's death in these words: "It hath been handed down to us from old time that, when the Blessed Virgin so gloriously fell asleep, all the apostles, who were wandering to and fro in the earth for the salvation of the Gentiles, were in a moment carried off into the air, and assembled at Jerusalem. And being there, there appeared to them a vision of angels, and there was heard the sound of the heavenly powers singing psalms, and so, amid the manifestation of His glory, into the hands of God she resigned her holy soul. Her body, which, by an unspeakable mystery, had held God, was carried forth amid the chants of angels and apostles, and laid in a sepulchre at Gethsemane, and there, for three days, the songs of angels never ceased.

"After three days the sound of angels' singing had ceased, and at that time the apostles, who were there, along with Thomas, the only one who had hitherto been absent, and who had come three days late, but was now fain to worship that body, which had held God, opened the tomb. But the holy body was now nowhere to be found. There remained only the cloths in which it had been enshrouded, and an unspeakable savour proceeded

from them, and they therefore again closed the grave. Confounded by this strange mystery, they were only able to imagine that the Same whom it had pleased to take flesh of the Virgin Mary, and of her to be made man, and to be born, being God the Word and the Lord of Glory, and who had kept her maidenhood unbroken even after childbirth, had also been pleased, after her departure hence, to honour her stainless body, whilst it was still free from corruption, by taking it away before the common and universal resurrection."

Such is the beautiful tradition about our Lady's decease, and it is the constant belief of the Catholic Church —though it has never been declared to be a matter of faith—that our Lord did not allow her holy body to see corruption, but glorified it, and "assumed" it into heaven in anticipation of the General Judgment.

Mary died by the natural law of the human race, and, to be in all things like her Divine Son, her death, moreover, was to be to us all the model of a happy death, and she was to be made the perpetual intercessor for the dying. The Church, in one of her prayers on that day, says: "O Lord, may the prayers of the Mother of God help Thy people, whom, although we know she passed away, according to the condition of human nature, we still feel to intercede for us with Thee in the glory of heaven." In meditating on the Assumption, then, we have to think of the joy of making a happy end, and what we must do to secure that happiness for ourselves.

But first, let us congratulate our Blessed Mother on the surpassing glory and happiness of her Assumption. Think how she longed to close her eyes to this world, which to her was such a place of exile—such a "desert land without path and without water"—how she desired to open them again to see the countenance which she so loved! In one moment she was to behold that face which was so dear to her, which she had watched so lovingly at Bethlehem and Nazareth. Oh, how had she longed to see Him face to face in His glory, with "the glory, as it were, of the only-begotten of the Father!" How

lovingly did Jesus meet His Blessed Mother! The Church says to every poor sinner at the hour of death: "May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and joyful countenance, and appoint thee a place amongst those who are to stand before Him for ever." With what a joyful countenance would He appear to His Blessed Mother! How tenderly would He present her before the throne of the Eternal Father, as the first in dignity, and the most gloriously perfect of all His creatures! In her, more than in all other creatures, was displayed the power of His grace. "He that is mighty hath done great things for me, and holy is His name."

The Assumption was a day of glory to God, and of joy to all creatures. "Mary hath been taken to heaven; the angels rejoice, they praise and bless the Lord." The saint from whom I before quoted, St. John Damascene, describes the joy of this festival in these words: "This day the holy and animated ark of the Living God, which had held within it its own Maker, is borne to rest in that temple of the Lord which is not made with hand. David, from whom it sprang, leapeth before it, and in company with him the angels dance and the archangels sing aloud. . . . This day the stainless maiden, who had been defiled by no earthly lust, but ennobled by heavenly desires, returned not to dust, but, being herself a living heaven, took her place among the heavenly mansions. From her true life had flowed for all men, and how should she taste death? But she yielded to the law established by Him to whom she had given birth, and, as a daughter of the old Adam, underwent the old sentence, which even her Son, who is the very Life Itself, had not refused; but, as the Mother of the Living God, she was worthily taken by Him unto Himself."

And now, my dear brethren, let us turn to the lessons which our Lady's Assumption teaches. If we would make our last end glorious and happy, so that our death may in some degree resemble hers, it is clear that we must try to imitate the chief characteristics of her life. What was it that made her end so calm and so happy? It was, in the first place, the spotless purity of her life. God

had, by a special grace, so watched over her as to preserve her from every sin, so that she could go before the throne of God without the least stain. A pure conscience is the best preparation for a happy death. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." Blessed, also, because they can come without fear into His presence. But Mary habitually did the will of God—she was always "the handmaid of the Lord;" and the spirit of obedience and submission is the great source of peace. What disturbs most of us is the constant struggle to do our own will instead of the will of God, and this makes life uneasy and death bitter. If we could be satisfied to leave life and death in the hands of God, and wish only to do His will, half the sorrow of death would be taken away.

Our Lady had nothing in this world to which she was attached. By this we mean that although she was full of love and sympathy for all the children on earth whom her Son had intrusted to her care, yet her love was all in God and for His sake, and therefore could not for a moment draw her away from Him.

Our Lady, then, was a model of these three great qualities which lead to a happy end—purity of conscience, the spirit of obedience, and detachment from this world—and in these she has been followed by all the saints of God. If we would make our last end like theirs, we too must cultivate these same virtues. But it was the immense burning love for Jesus which was the crown of Our Lady's Assumption: it is love alone which can conquer all the pains and sorrows of the hour of death: since "love is as strong as death." If, then, we aim at imitating in some sort the glory of Mary's Assumption, it must be by striving to obtain some share of her great love for Jesus.

In the last Glorious Mystery—the Coronation of the Blessed Virgin Mary—we have to meditate on the bright crown of glory which Jesus placed on the head of His Blessed Mother. The glory which creatures possess in heaven is simply a reflection of the infinite glory of their Creator, and increases in proportion as they approach His throne. Mary's place was the highest. The greatest of the archangels is the servant of God. "He maketh

His angels spirits, and His ministers a burning fire" (Ps. ciii. 4). Mary, too, was His handmaid, and the humblest of His servants, but she was more—she was chosen also to be His Mother. She is like the woman described in the Apocalypse: "Clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars" (xii. 1). "She cometh forth as the morning, rising fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 9).

The glory of heaven corresponds with the favours bestowed by God on His creatures, and their co-operation with them. Mary's crown of glory, then, was beautiful in proportion to the privileges she had received; she was crowned for her Immaculate Conception, for her spotless virginity, for her Divine maternity, and for her special privilege of closest intimacy with God made man—for Bethlehem, and Nazareth, and Calvary.

"On Thy right hand stood the Queen, in golden raiment, wrought about with variety" (Ps. xliv. 10). In virtue of her ineffable union with God, she has become the Queen of all creation. She is the Queen of the angels, since to her has been given a higher ministry than theirs. She is the Queen of apostles; their office was to announce the Word of God to men, but she was to bring forth the Word Incarnate, and to take part in the wonders of the Incarnation. She is the Queen of martyrs in right of the sword of grief which pierced her heart at Calvary; and, finally, Queen of all God's servants, since she is the humblest and most obedient of them all.

But we are not idly to contemplate the beauty of our Lady's crown, but to remember that in our Father's house "there are many mansions," and that a crown of glory is reserved for each of us if only we will "strive, by good works, to make our calling and election sure" (2 St. Peter i. 10).

"So run that you may obtain. . . . They indeed strive that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one" (1 Cor. ix. 24).

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXVI.

God, our Judge

"Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer" (St. Luke xvi. 2).

In the parable of the unjust steward, my dear brethren, our Lord puts before us the great account we shall have to give some day or other. Every man living, great and small, will have to give an account of his stewardship, and must answer for the use he has made of the treasures entrusted to him—that is to say, he will be judged by his Maker for every thought, word, and deed of his life. The virtue of religion depends, in a great measure, on the sense we have of our responsibility to God; those who keep it before their eyes, and constantly remember that they have to account to God for all they do, are religious people, whilst those who forget their responsibility, or do not act up to it, are irreligious people. The first warning which God gave to man after the fall was to remind him that he was an accountable being, responsible for his own actions. "And the Lord said to Cain, Why art thou angry, and why is thy countenance fallen? If thou do well, shalt thou not receive? But if ill, shall not sin forthwith be present at the door? But the lust thereof shall be under thee, and thou shalt have dominion over it" (Gen. iv. 6). When the New Covenant began, the Lord renewed His warning, and again reminded His people of judgment. "Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus, who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into heaven" (Acts. i. 11). The apostles were to go forth into the world with great gifts and powers, but they must understand that they would one day be severely called to account for the use they made of the treasures entrusted to them.

The first innate idea of natural religion is that we are accountable to God—that is, that there is One who has both the power and the right to call us to account for our doings. We feel instinctively that we are not our own masters, and that we are bound to obey a higher rule than that of merely pleasing ourselves. It is this feeling of right and wrong, and that we are bound to do right, which is the very foundation of religion. It is very seldom that even the worst men can rid themselves of the sense of responsibility; it comes home to them, whether they will or not, and testifies against them on the part of God. We see this in the Roman Governor Felix, before whom St. Paul was placed as a prisoner. "And as Paul treated of justice and chastity, and the judgment to come, Felix, being terrified, answered, For this time, go thy way" (Acts xxiv. 25). The conscience even of this pagan soldier was touched, and responded to the apostle's words when he began to speak of the judgment to come.

The idea of having a Master to whom we are responsible leads us necessarily to the thought of reward and punishment. "If thou do well, shalt thou not receive?" It would be impossible for us to conceive that an infinitely great and all-powerful Master could lay His commandments on His creatures, and then fail to enforce the observance of them. Accordingly, the first idea of God is of one who rewards the good and punishes the wicked. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is a rewarder to them that seek Him" (Heb. xi. 6). And to deserve God's rewards, and escape His punishments, is one of the prominent motives for doing good, which the Holy Scripture puts before us. The Psalmist, for instance, says: "I have inclined my heart to do Thy justifications for ever for the reward" (Ps. cxviii.)

The Creed speaks of judgment in the seventh article. "From thence He shall come to judge the living and the dead;" and the Catechism gives the following answers in explanation: "Christ will come again from heaven at the last day to judge all mankind." "Christ

will judge all our thoughts, words, works, and omissions." "He will say to the wicked, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." "He will say to the just, Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you." "Will not everyone be judged at their death as well as at the last day?" "Yes; it is appointed unto man once to die, and, after this, the judgment."

The Catholic doctrine, then, is that there are two judgments—the general judgment, when the whole human race must stand before its Creator to be judged at the great and terrible day of the Lord—and the special, or particular judgment, in which each individual soul has to be tried. These two judgments are wonderfully different in all their circumstances and surroundings; but yet they are, we may say, but one judgment, since the sentence pronounced in the one is but confirmed in the other.

Let us see what our Lord Himself tells us of the great day which is to come, when, as St. Paul tells us, "the fire will try every man's work, of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 13). Our Lord says: "Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven; and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven, with much power and majesty. And He shall send His angels with a trumpet and a great voice: and they shall gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them." "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him." "And when the Son of Man shall come in His majesty, and all His angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the seat of His majesty. And all nations shall be gathered together before Him, and He shall separate them, one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And He shall set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on His left. Then shall the King say to them

that shall be on His right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the just answer Him, saying, Lord, when did we see Thee hungry, and fed Thee? Thirsty, and gave Thee drink? . . . And the King answering, shall say to them, Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me. Then shall He say to them also that shall be on His left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and His angels; for I was hungry, and you gave me not to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave not to drink. . . . And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (St. Matt. xxiv. 30; xxv. 31. Apoc. i. 7).

Here we have placed before us a picture of that great accounting day, as far as it is possible for us to imagine it: for we cannot possibly conceive it as it really is, since no description could ever enable us to understand it. But much must go before this terrible judgment; the world as it is now, the enemy of God, must first perish. All its riches and power—its arts and sciences—and all the material things in which it trusted must be destroyed. "The day of the Lord shall come as a thief, in which the heavens shall pass away with great violence, the elements shall be melted with heat, and the earth, with the works which are in it, shall be burnt up" (2 St. Peter iii. 10).

"*Dies iræ, dies illa, Solvet sæclum in favilla, teste David cum Sibylla.*" "The day of wrath, that dreadful day, shall the whole earth in ashes lay, as David and the sybils say." And then the dead shall arise for judgment. "In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall arise again incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor. xv. 52).

From gorgeous tomb and humble churchyard—from the earth and from the sea—the dead shall arise. The king and his people, the pastor and his flock, the rich and the poor, the good and the bad, shall all come forth. *Tuba mirum spargens sonum, per sepulchra regionum, coget omnes ante thronum.*

How great the trembling and the fear
When the tremendous Judge draws near;
When the great trumpet's blown,
Nature and death shall see amazed
Poor trembling man for judgment raised,
Leaving the dreary tomb.

"And I saw a great white throne, and One sitting upon it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away, and there was no place found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing in the presence of the throne, and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged by those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead that were in it; and death and hell gave up their dead that were in them; and they were judged, every one according to their works" (Apoc. xx. 12).

And what, my dear brethren, will be our place in this great arising? We, too, must be there, with our neighbours and friends—with our parents and children—all of us to stand before that "great white throne," for, as the apostle tells us, "we all shall stand before the judgment-seat of Christ" (Rom. xiv. 10).

Holy Job says: "I know that my Redeemer liveth, and in the last day I shall rise out of the earth. And I shall be clothed again with my skin, and in my flesh I shall see God. Whom I myself shall see, and not another; this my hope is laid up in my bosom" (Job. xix. 26). "This mortal must put on immortality." But what sort of an immortality? The immortality of the body will correspond with the condition of the soul, by which it is animated.

In this life there are many whited sepulchres—fair without, but full of filth and corruption within. Men

can carry about crimes hidden from their brethren under a fair exterior; the assassin may conceal his deeds under an appearance of friendliness; the impious man may go about amongst his neighbours deceiving them all by his mask of piety; but then it will not be so. What we are in our hearts, what we have been found to be in the judgment of God, that we shall be before the eyes of all creation. Oh, how many deceptions will be removed at that great resurrection! How many, whom the world has praised and admired, will be found to be but idols of clay!—how many who are now looked up to and revered as saints, and receive titles of honour from men, will be found unworthy in that day! Which of us can stand the terrible light of that day? The more honourable our position, and the greater the reverence with which we are treated by men, the more reason we have to fear. The priest rising amidst his flock, the father rising amidst his children, who can imagine their shame if they are not what they ought to be?—if, "having preached to others, they themselves have become castaways"?

"In the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn" (St. Matt. xiii. 30). Now has that harvest come, and the final separation has to be made. In this life the good and bad are mixed together, and God "makes His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust" (St. Matt. v. 45). In the hearts of men, too, evil is mixed up with good. You very seldom find any one who is wholly evil, who does not, even in the midst of corruption, retain some good; but then the final separation is to be made. Those who have chosen iniquity as their part, and made their portion with God's enemies, will find that by doing so they have lost all that is good. "He loved cursing, and it shall come unto him; and he would not have blessing, and it shall be far from him. And he put on cursing like a garment, and it went like water into his entrails, and like oil into his bones. May it be unto him like a garment which covereth him, and like a girdle with which he is girded con-

tinually." Such is the judgment which will then be pronounced against sinners.

"The Son of Man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity" (St. Matt. xiii. 14). The same place can no longer contain the good and the bad. They had been allowed "to grow until the harvest," that sinners might be converted, and both good and bad might reach their maturity; but now the harvest is come and the great and final separation must be made; and "He shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats; and He shall set the sheep on His right hand and the goats on His left." Let us keep this last and terrible separation before our eyes. Each one of us has now to choose on which side He will be found: "You have your choice: choose this day, that which pleaseth you, whom would you rather serve" (Josue xxiv. 15). On which side do you mean to stand on that day? We have to choose between good and evil, but that choice will be for all eternity.

And then the judgment has to be made: a twofold judgment, in which the dealings of God with His creatures will be explained, and the case of each individual made clear. The ways of God's Providence are now mysterious to to us, since we "see in a glass in a dark manner," and "therefore judge not before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of hearts" (1 Cor. iv. 5). Inconceivable will that judgment be in its rapidity, its certainty, and its clearness. The light of God will illuminate all hearts, and, at once, "bring to light the hidden things of darkness," and, for good or evil, every secret of each man's life will be displayed. There will no longer be any room for disguise or self-deception in that fierce light, but each one will appear in his own eyes, and before all creatures, as he is in the sight of God. Then will appear what have been the dealings of God with every soul—how bounteous He has been to all—how patient and long-suffering He has been to sinners. He seems, Him-

self, to condescend to be judged, and to call upon all creatures to judge between Him and His people. "Judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to have done to my vineyard, that I have not done" (Isaias v. 3). "To Thee only have I sinned and done evil before Thee, that Thou mayest be justified in Thy words, and mayest overcome when Thou art judged" (Psalm l. 6).

"And these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting." The awful part of this judgment is that the sentence is final. There is no appeal —there is no room for further trial—there is no longer space for mercy; but the sentence follows, at once, on the judgment, and is irrevocable. On earth there is no case so bad but there is something to hope for—some change, some improvement may be expected, to enable us to bear the evils of the present moment; but, when once that terrible judgment has been pronounced against us, there is no hope of any mitigation, but the sentence is unchangeable, and is for ever and for ever.

But this General Judgment, great and terrible as it is, is, after all, only the conclusion or second act of another judgment, which has already taken place—and our fate will have already been decided, it may be, for ages, before that great day of God arrives. That day is God's secret: the apostles themselves, and the faithful of every age, have exhausted themselves in conjecturing when the Lord will come to judge His people; but our Lord's words are plain: "It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own powers" (Acts i. 7). St. Peter says: "But of this one thing be not ignorant, my beloved, that one day with the Lord is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord delayeth not His promise, as some imagine, but dealeth patiently for your sake, not willing that any should perish, but that all should return to repentance" (2 St. Peter iii. 8). But if the last day is so far off, and the time of our Lord's great coming so uncertain, the *first* act of that Judgment is very near: "Behold the Judge standeth at the door" (St. James v. 9). The

Particular Judgment is the one which is all-important to us as individuals: it takes place at the very hour of our death, and settles our doom for all eternity. "If the tree fall to the south, or to the north, in what place soever it shall fall, there shall it be" (Eccles. xi. 3): what has there been decided will be confirmed at the General Judgment, but will not be changed.

Think, my dear brethren, what elements of terror there are in that secret and solemn judgment. We know not how soon it may be upon us: for all that any one can tell, this very day may be his day of trial: this very day he may hear the words: "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." It may come suddenly, but it certainly will not be very long delayed. A few more years, ten, twenty perhaps, and we *know* that that is all. Each one can calculate what remains to him of his life even if it should be prolonged to the full period of human existence—and it is very little. "Shall not the fewness of my days be ended shortly." "Behold, short years pass away and I am walking in a path by which I shall not return" (Job. x. 20; xvi. 23). "This therefore I say, brethren, the time is short" (1 Cor. vii. 29), and at the end of this time comes judgment.

Who can tell what it will be to go forth from the body and stand before our Judge? We may meditate on it all our days, but we can never conceive the awe of that first meeting—of that first sight of its Creator which shall be allowed to the soul of man. One moment in this world, surrounded by all the familiar objects on which, perhaps, our eyes now rest every day: the walls, the furniture, the books and pictures, the crucifix, which we know so well, and, the next, face to face with our Lord Jesus Christ! A few moments before we were surrounded by those dear to us, whose presence seemed a support even at that moment, and now we stand alone before God. "A cry was made, Behold the Bridegroom cometh; go ye forth to meet Him." "Go forth, Christian soul, out of this world"—and the soul has gone forth to judgment. You have, perhaps, my dear

brethren, knelt beside the death-bed of some dear friend when the moment of separation came; and you have felt how, in that instant, a dark wall—an impassable gulf—came between you and the one you loved; what must this separation be to the soul that is entering so suddenly into the new and unknown world to come?

"Go ye forth to meet Him!" What must that first meeting be, when man stands face to face with his Creator! On Mount Thabor the apostles saw our Lord transfigured before them, "and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became white as snow . . . and the disciples fell upon their face and were very much afraid" (St. Matt. xvii. 2).

One passing glimpse of the glory of Jesus was more than His apostles could bear; what will it be to us when the veil is entirely removed, and "I myself shall see Him, and my eyes shall behold, and not another."

He has "put on praise and beauty, and is clothed with light as with a garment" (Ps. ciii. 2). He is "beautiful above the sons of men," and the sight of Him cannot fail to draw to Himself the hearts of all His creatures. Oh, how shall we wish at that moment to cast ourselves at His feet, and wash away all offences and estrangement with our tears! But no; the time for that is past, and, instead of a loving Redeemer, we have to meet a strict and impartial Judge, to whom we must reckon to the last farthing.

"Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
Quem patronum rogaturus,
Quum vix justus sit securus."

"What, then, shall I have to plead,
Who for me will intercede,
When even saints some comfort need?"

In this world condemnation is slow in coming; there is room to hope for delays, and evasions, and excuses. But before that great Judge we can have no such hope. "Neither is there any creature invisible in His sight, but all things are naked and open to His eyes, to whom our speech is" (Heb. iv. 13).

"Christ will judge our thoughts, words, works, and

omission," and which of us is prepared to give an account of them all? How little do we ourselves know of our thoughts and imaginations! They pass to and fro in our minds, and we easily forget them; and yet these thoughts, if they are deliberate acts and consents of the will, may be grievous sins, and sufficient for our destruction. They are, indeed, the beginning and source of all sinfulness. Our Lord says: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, blasphemies—these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 19). The guilt of all these terrible sins comes from the heart which originates them, and yet most people take but little care to watch over the movements of their own hearts.

So, again, with our words: the occasions of sinning are incessant, and St. James tells us that "if any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man" (St. James iii. 2). But our Lord's words are: "I say to you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account for it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xii. 36). How shall we give an account of the idle words, the uncharitable words, the profane words, the unbecoming words of our lives? Our actions, too, will not satisfy us then as well as they do now, for it is not only the action itself which will be weighed, but the spirit, the feeling, the intention with which it was done. The world is contented with the outward action, and praises us for what we do, without thinking much of our motives; but at God's judgment-seat it will not be so; for there the motives and the heart are the chief things to be considered.

But, most of all, my dear brethren, let us think of the flood of light which will then pour down upon us with regard to all our duties. We shall then, perhaps, see a vast number of things which we could have done, and ought to have done, but did not do. Will not many men be lost for sins of omission—for the neglect of duties to which now they shut their eyes? Oh, how painful will be the awaking of many, who, like Dives, have "feasted sumptuously every day," and hardly trouble

themselves to think of what the obligations and duties of life really are! This, my dear brethren, is the account we have to give, and no man can tell how soon he will be called upon to render it.

But, if it is terrible, we have abundant means of preparing ourselves for it. Every day we come before our Judge, we can kneel before Him in the Sacrament of His love. His face is veiled, but He is there on the altar in very deed, ready to hear us and to succour us. We can speak to Him in His tribunal of Penance, and there rehearse the confession we shall one day have to make; but the confession will now be made to one whose desire is to pardon, not to judge. He is near to us, and is a hidden God in the midst of us, ever ready to grant our petitions and supply us with everything needful for our salvation.

"Jesu, quem velatum nunc aspicio
Oro fiat illud quod tam sitio
Ut Te revelata cernens facie
Visu sim beatus Tuæ gloriæ."

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXVII.

Sin.

"I did but taste a little honey, and behold I die" (1 Kings xiv. 43).

In the parable of the marriage feast, my dear brethren, we read how "the King went in to see the guests: and he saw there a man who had not on the wedding garment. And he saith to him: Friend, how camest thou in hither not having on a wedding garment? But he was silent. Then the King said to the waiters: Bind his hands and feet, and cast him into the exterior darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (St. Matt. xxii. 11). This gives us a terrible picture of the judgment of God: there are no long proceedings which admit of delay or excuse, but everything is summed up in this one question: "How came you here not having on the wedding garment?" So it will be, in substance, at the great judgment at the last day. It is necessary, indeed, that every act of a man's life should be scrutinized, since God "will render to every man according to his works;" but salvation or condemnation depends upon only one question: "Does death find us in the grace of God or in mortal sin?"

See how Holy Scripture insists on the simplicity of this decision: "And another book was opened, which was the book of life, and whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the pool of fire" (Apoc. xx. 12). The name is written in that book, or it is not—there is no compromise: all depends on that one question. Again the lesson of the marriage feast is repeated in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins: "And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise: Give us of your oil, for our lamps are gone out. The wise answered, saying: Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. Now, whilst they went to buy, the Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage, and the door was shut. But at last came also the other virgins, saying: Lord, Lord, open to us. But he answering said: Amen, I say to you, I know you not" (St. Matt. xxv. 6). Here, again, the future of the ten virgins depends on the one question—are they in time, or are they too late?

The whole of human life is meant as a preparation for God's judgment; but that preparation is concentrated in the last moment of mortal life, and the whole future depends on whether we die the friends or the enemies of God—that is to say, whether we die in a state of grace or in mortal sin. If we die in the friendship of God, our names are "written in the book of life," and every past rebellion is pardoned, and, through God's mercy, we shall remain His friends through all eternity; but if we are found with one single unforgiven mortal sin in our souls at that terrible moment, then we are rebels, and there is no place for us. "Amen, I say to you, I know you not." It is fearful to think what evil one mortal sin will accomplish. It may have been long ago committed, and may have been almost forgotten by the sinner; it may have been a sin of thought, unknown to all save the sinner and His Judge, yet it is enough to separate him for ever from God.

Let us, then, to-day, consider the nature and consequences of sin, as they will appear to us at the great judgment. The subject is discussed in the tenth article of the Creed—"The Forgiveness of Sins." On this the Catechism gives us the following answers: "Sin is an offence against God, by any thought, word, deed, or omission, against the law of God." "There are two kinds of sin—original sin and actual sin." "Original sin is that guilt and stain which we inherit from Adam, who was

the origin and head of all mankind." "Actual sin is every sin which we ourselves commit." "Actual sin is divided into mortal sin and venial sin." "Mortal sin is a grievous offence against God." "It is called mortal sin because it kills the soul and deserves hell." "Mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace, which is the supernatural life of the soul." "They who die in mortal sin will go to hell for all eternity." "Venial sin is an offence which does not kill the soul, yet displeases God, and often leads to mortal sin."

The sin which we have now to consider is actual sin, in which is included every offence, great and small, which we ourselves commit. It is important to remember the reason of this name of *actual* sin. The name is given because every sin must be a human act—an act, that is, of the will of man. No external power can ever *compel* you to commit a sin. The devil, the world, and the flesh may do their worst; storms of temptation may come upon you, and suggestions of evil of the most frightful description may fill your imagination; but there is not the least *sin* except by the act of your own will; and, if the will refuses its consent, all the violence of temptation is powerless. We find this exemplified in the lives of the saints. Holy people are often tempted with a violence which corresponds to the graces they have received; and, accordingly, we read of the saints being sometimes tried by the most abominable thoughts and most shameful temptations. God gave them grace, however, to resist the storm, and steadily to refuse the consent of their will; so that, in the midst of all the evil that was surging around them, their souls remained untouched, and they were still pleasing to God—nay, more, the very storm of temptation which tried them only increased their merit in His sight. "Therefore, we will not fear when the earth shall be troubled and the mountains cast into the heart of the sea. The waters roared and were troubled . . . the stream of the river maketh joyful the city of God; the Most High hath sanctified His own tabernacle. God is in the midst thereof; it shall not be moved" (Ps. xlv. 3).

It is consoling to us to think that no power on earth or

in hell can injure our souls, except by our own free consent, and that God will always give us strength to refuse this consent. "A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand, but it shall not come nigh thee . . . thou shalt walk upon the asp and the basilisk: and thou shalt trample under foot the lion and the dragon" (Ps. xc. 7, 13).

On the other hand, the act of the will is sufficient for sin: it is not necessary that any external consequences should result from it. The act may begin and end in the will; it may be a wilful complacency, or a deliberate desire, and nothing more, and yet it may be a grievous sin. Men only look at the visible consequences of sin, and consider it as it regards other people, and, therefore, we are apt to forget that the sin is in the inward act and not in the outward consequences that follow from it. When an evil thought or intention has actually been carried into effect, the act of the will is generally more vehement and determined than when it has been purely mental, and in this way the result increases the guilt, but otherwise the external effect is a mere accident in the sight of God.

We now come to the distinction between mortal and venial sin, which requires some consideration and explanation. First, consider how immense is the difference between them; there is a gulf, as it were, which separates one from the other. One mortal sin is a greater evil in itself, and more terrible in its consequences, than any possible number of venial sins. Venial sin can easily lead people into mortal sin, and does so only too often; but no amount of venial sins can ever make a mortal sin. See, again, what are its effect: "Mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of sanctifying grace," and "they who die in mortal sin will go to hell for all eternity."

The man who commits mortal sin may have loved God once, and done a great deal to serve Him; but if he perseveres in sin, all the good that he has done is poisoned, and made of no avail for eternity. "If I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, and if I should deliver my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth

me nothing" (1 Cor. xiii. 3). The sinner, by this one act, has lost his birthright and his place in heaven, has cut himself off from God, and deserved the terrible sentence: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

With all these terrible consequences, and although there is no comparison possible between mortal and venial sin, yet we often see one act described as a venial sin, and another, which appears only a degree or two more serious, is said to be mortal. The difference between them, however, is one, not of degree, but of kind. Mortal sin is an act of rebellion against God, whereas a venial sin, however bad it may be, is, for some reason or other, *not* such an act, and between rebellion and non-rebellion there cannot be any comparison.

Every sin is a disobedience to God's Commandments, and as such is in itself an act of rebellion against God. "Thou hast broken my yoke, thou hast burst my bonds, and thou saidst, I will not serve" (Jer. ii. 20). By every sin we "break God's yoke" and say, "I will not serve." Sin, therefore, in the abstract, and of its own nature, is mortal, because it is essentially an act of rebellion, and in perfect intelligences there could be no such thing as venial sin. We cannot easily conceive a venial sin amongst the angels; an act of disobedience of any kind would be a rebellion, as the angelic nature could not but see and realize, in all cases, the nature of the sinful act. With men, however, it is different; a number of palliations spring from the very weakness of our nature which prevent us from always incurring the terrible guilt of rebellion. Mists arise from the imperfection of our understanding, which lead us astray, so that we do not fully know what we are doing; so our Lord prayed on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

There is, then, in venial sin something or other which prevents the act from assuming the full and complete guilt of rebellion, and, therefore, it does not make us God's enemies, by depriving us of sanctifying grace. Let us consider some of these palliations. In the first place,

people are excused in some degree by want of knowledge. Sometimes want of knowledge is so complete as to excuse from any sin, as it is clear that where there is no knowledge of a command there can be no disobedience in not observing it. In many cases, however, ignorance is not so complete as this, and yet it may be sufficient to excuse from the guilt of mortal sin. Our Lord, for instance, foretells to His apostles that "they will put you out of the synagogues; yea, the hour cometh that whosoever killeth you will think that he doth a service to God" (St. John xvi. 1); and, again, St. Paul excuses himself on account of ignorance for the things he had done before his conversion: "I give Him thanks who hath strengthened me, Jesus Christ our Lord, for that He hath accounted me faithful, putting me into the ministry, who before was a blasphemer and a persecutor and contumelious; but I obtained the mercy of God, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. i. 12). In both these cases ignorance was, to some extent, an excuse; they *ought* to have known better; if they had looked more carefully, perhaps they would have known better; but they did not, and, therefore, perhaps "they obtained mercy because they did it ignorantly in unbelief."

It is not for men to judge to what extent ignorance is an excuse; we cannot tell when it is complete, and when it is a faulty ignorance for which men are, to some degree, responsible, and when it is a mere pretence, as when the Psalmist says of the wicked man: "He would not understand, that he might do well" (Ps. xxxv. 4). God will judge all men according to the means of knowledge they possessed; and it is for us to be lenient in judging of others, and careful to act up to the knowledge we ourselves have.

A sin which, of its own nature, would be grievous, is often rendered venial, and sometimes altogether excused, by want of deliberation. This may almost be called another form of ignorance, since, if you do not think what you are doing, and do not perceive its serious nature, or its consequences, you may be said for the moment to be ignorant of them—that is, the knowledge which you

possess is not before your mind to guide you. It is part of the inherent weakness of human nature that even the best and wisest of men are liable to sin from want of thought. Sometimes this is the result of surprise, or a sudden impulse of passion—sometimes from the lethargy of the body, which weighs down the soul, as the Psalmist says: "My soul hath slumbered through weariness; strengthen me, Thou, in Thy words" (Ps. cxviii. 28). A rebellion against God must be a fully wilful act, and, therefore, sins committed without due deliberation cannot be mortal sins; they are sins, because greater care and watchfulness would have prevented them, but they are not mortal, because human weakness has come in, in such a way as to prevent them from being a real act of rebellion.

The same is true of smallness of matter—that is, when the object of the sin is a very trifling matter in itself. It may be said that the smallness of the object is no excuse, and, indeed, that the trifling nature of the object for which we have broken the Commandments of God is an aggravation of the offence rather than an excuse; that a theft of even the smallest thing is a theft just as much as if the object were greater, and is just as much forbidden. It is not so, however, in fact, The nature of man is such, that after a certain point it is quite impossible for him to appreciate the importance of things. With God, all things, great and small, are, in a sense, equally great; there is no great or small with Him who is infinite, but to man things that are very small lose their significance. Just as material objects must reach a certain size before his eyes can distinguish them, so, morally, things must have a certain degree of importance before his mind can appreciate its responsibilities about them.

Many offences, therefore, are excused from the guilt of mortal sin, because the mind cannot fully take in their importance, and it is possible to commit them without the slightest idea of rebelling against God. St. James tells us that "in many things we all offend" (iii. 2), and the wise man says: "The just man shall

fall seven times" (Prov. xxiv. 16). With all the care that man can take, he is constantly offending; he is constantly led into sin by ignorance, or want of consideration, or by surprise, or by carelessness, in what he thinks trifles. Such sins are not necessarily a rebellion against God, but arise from the weakness of nature, which he cannot entirely control. They are sins, because in each case it is his duty to watch more carefully over himself, so as to avoid offence; but they are venial sins, because they are committed without any idea of seriously offending God or losing His favour.

For mortal sin, then, three conditions are necessary: you must have sufficient knowledge and opportunity for deliberation; it must be a fully wilful act, and the object must be something which strikes you as a matter of consequence, either for its own intrinsic importance, or for some other reason. Some evil is proposed to a man which he knows to be contrary to God's law: he feels that it is a serious matter, and one in which he runs the risk of losing the favour of God: he has time to think, and weigh and choose—and then deliberately gratifies himself, and "prefers the creature before the Creator, who is blessed for ever." In this case the sin plainly involves a rebellion against God, and is a mortal sin.

It is obvious that, generally speaking, no one can tell with certainty, what constitutes a mortal sin in another: since no one knows the exact amount of knowledge and deliberation with which the act was committed: nay, we cannot be sure about the nature of our own sins, since the acts of the mind are very subtle, and there is often a great deal more deliberation and malice than we allow ourselves to suppose: therefore it is that the Holy Scripture says: "There are just men and wise men, and their works are in the hand of God: and yet man knoweth not whether he be worthy of love or hatred" (Eccles. ix. 1).

When, therefore, you are told that such an action is a mortal sin, it merely means that it is so, supposing it to be committed with all the dispositions necessary to make anything a mortal sin; or, in other words, that it is a

thing sufficiently weighty in itself, according to the judgment of theologians, to be the subject matter of a mortal sin. Again, sometimes a thing may be called a venial sin, but it may be done with such dispositions as to be mortal: if, for instance, you supposed some action to be grievously sinful, and yet did it deliberately, it would be a mortal sin, however trifling the thing was in itself, because your act would clearly involve a rebellion against God in what you believed a serious matter.

And now we must place before our minds the terrible consequences of mortal sin, and learn to think of it as the one great evil we have to dread. Mortal sin is a deliberate rebellion against God, and, by it, a man turns from God, and chooses evil instead of Him, by "worshipping and serving the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed for ever" (Rom. i. 25). If he is miserable enough to die with this choice unrevoked, he cuts himself off for ever from all good; for "what participation hath justice with injustice, or what fellowship has light with darkness" (2 Cor. vi. 14)? By his own act he has chosen injustice, he has chosen darkness, and injustice and darkness must be his portion. By his rebellion he has taken part with the first rebels, the fallen angels, and made common cause with them, and, therefore, he has his portion in "everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels." "And the angels who kept not their principality, but forsook their own habitation, He hath reserved unto darkness in everlasting chains unto the judgment of the great day" (St. Jude 6.). By mortal sin a man takes his part with these fallen angels, and for him, as for them, the "storm of darkness is reserved for ever." Rebellion blots out those who are guilty of it from that book of life of which it is written: "And whatsoever was not found written in the book of life, was cast into the pool of fire" (Ap. xx. 15); "their worm shall not die, and their fire shall not be quenched" (Isaias lxvi. 24).

It is a fearful, but necessary, thing to meditate upon these terrible judgments. Men are so heedless, and self-willed, that, in spite of all warnings, they will persist in making light of mortal sin, and in being easy and self-

satisfied even when they are defying their Creator. Have we not done it ourselves?—have we never spoken as if a few sins mattered but little—as if we needn't fear to go on in sin for a while? It will be well, indeed, for us if we can say that we ourselves have never been guilty of the recklessness of God's anger, which we so often see around us. It is in vain that the Holy Scripture tells us that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31)—that "the Lord thy God is a consuming fire"—that "thy justice is as the mountains of God, and thy judgments are a great abyss" (Ps. xxxv. 7). In defiance of all warning, people go on imagining that the Infinite God is one like to themselves, whose commands they may despise with impunity. They go on abusing His patience, and rebelling against Him; but "He is patient, because He is eternal," and, in the day of His anger, "He shows might in His arm, and scatters the proud in the conceit of their heart" (St. Luke i. 51). "To him that is little, mercy is granted; but the mighty shall be mightily tormented. For God will not except any man's person, neither will He stand in awe of any man's greatness" (Wisdom vi. 7).

"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." He is infinite in all His attributes; infinite in His goodness and mercy, and also infinite in His power and the severity of His justice. Wherever the creature comes in collision with the immensity of his Creator, it must "grind him to powder." Let us listen to the voice of the rich man in his torments: "and lifting up his eyes when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame" (St. Luke xvi. 24). What now to him are all the enjoyments of his life? "I did but taste a drop of honey, and behold I die." The pleasures of sense were but that one drop of honey which brought death with it; the creatures which were preferred to God have all turned to dust and ashes, no matter how great and splendid they

once appeared. Now that God Himself has appeared, all creatures "are before Him, as if they had no being at all, and are counted to Him as nothing" (Isaias xl. 17). So it has appeared to those who have gone before us, and so it will one day appear to us. Let us not, then, be deluded by the objects the world presents as temptations, even if it should show us all "the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them." They, too, in turn will pass away, and may leave us to that despairing cry: "I did but taste one drop of honey, and behold I die."

The essential punishment of mortal sin is the loss of God, and the knowledge that we have lost Him by our own fault; it is not so much that He has withdrawn Himself, as that we have rejected Him. In this life our vision is dazzled by the objects of sense around us, and we do not see that God is absolutely necessary for us, and that He is our Supreme Good, without whom we cannot possibly be happy. We do not know fully, therefore, what we are doing when we reject Him, and it is in this that our trial consists; without this partial darkness there could be no state of probation. In this life we can shut our eyes to God, and our thoughts stray away only too easily after every passing creature; but when once this darkness is removed, and we have seen Him as He is, we can never more forget Him. "We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face. Now, I know in part, but then I shall know even as I am known" (1 Cor. xiii. 12). The thought of Him, and of His beauty and glory, will pursue us for all eternity, for our joy or for our sorrow, as we ourselves have made it.

How great will be the misery of a Christian soul that has lost God for ever!—always drawn to Him who was its last end!—always driven back upon itself, and what it has chosen for itself!—always dwelling on that despairing thought: I have lost God for ever, and lost Him by my own fault! I might have been saved, and I am lost for all eternity! With what agony will such a soul look back to the moments of grace—to an innocent and holy childhood—to a fervent first Communion, perhaps—to a thousand graces and blessings, all now "made void"—to

a thousand warnings, all disregarded! And then that one mortal sin, which was, perhaps, the turning-point of that soul's career—which was the final rejection of God's grace, and led direct to its reprobation. How clear will all these things then be! We too, my dear brethren, have had, and are now having, our seasons of grace: we can think of many times when God's grace has touched our hearts, and He still continues day after day to speak to us: how will these things look to us through all eternity? Will they be our joy and thankfulness, or our torment? We know that it depends upon the use we now make of our present opportunities. "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts" (Ps. xciv. 8); or you may turn that loving voice which now speaks to you, into a bitter and unavailing regret for all eternity.

To conclude, let us dwell on the thought with which we started: salvation depends on one question—when we die, are we the friends or the enemies of God? We must be one or the other. Are we in sanctifying grace, or in mortal sin? By the help of God, we can be in a state of grace if we will; no one can take away from us the wedding garment in which we have been clothed; no one can extinguish the burning light given to us to hold at our baptism, if we choose to keep it: we can never lose God's friendship by inadvertence, or by accident, since it must be by our own free and deliberate act that we rebel against our God. If we are ever tempted to mortal sin, let us weigh well the consequences, and remember that, by one mortal sin, we may lose God for all eternity.

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SERMON LXXVIII.

Daily Faults.

"Be at agreement with thine adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him" (St. Matt. v. 25).

When God calls us to account, my dear brethren, His judgment will not only be righteous and severe, but it will be most searching and accurate. He will pass over nothing. Things that seem trivial in men's eyes, for good or for evil, will be accurately weighed in His balance. "Thou hast ordered all things in measure, number and weight" (Wisd. xi. 21). God has "weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance" (Is. xl. 12), and has, at the same time, ordered, "in measure, number, and weight," even the smallest of the insects that sport in the sunshine; so He takes an account of the deeds of men, both great things and small. "Are not these things stored up with me, and sealed up in my treasures?" (Deut. xxxii. 34). The Master takes an account of all His servants, whether much or little has been committed to them; He reckons just as accurately with him that has received but one talent as with him to whom five have been committed. "The Son of Man shall come in the glory of His Father, with His angels; and then will He render to every man according to His works" (St. Matt. xvi. 27). "Therefore, every one of us shall render account to God for himself" (Rom. xiv. 12). "For there is no respect of persons with God. For whosoever have sinned without the law, shall perish without the law; and whosoever have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law" (Rom. ii. 12).

"The fire shall try every one's work, of what sort it is" (1 Cor. iii. 13). God's judgment will not be contented with exterior show, but will search the work of man, and

find out every flaw and imperfection that there is in it; and, moreover, everything that is wanted to its completeness. "I find not thy works full before my God" (Apoc. iii. 2). Thoughts, words, and works will all be subject to this minute examination, and not even a passing word will escape unexamined; for "I say to you that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment; for, by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned" (St. Matt. xii. 36).

If God so judges, it is plain that men must not dare to make light of trifles; but that each one is bound to guard himself as much as possible even against the smallest violation of God's law. "Thou hast commanded that Thy commandments be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4), and there is no safety but in using the greatest diligence in the observance of them.

When we are considering the awful guilt and consequences of sin, which involves a rebellion and treason against God, and, perhaps, also, an eternal separation from Him, we are hardly able to think of any lesser guilt, just as when we have been gazing at the lightning's flash we can hardly see the light of an ordinary flame; but sin of any kind is, in itself, a terrible evil.

Venial sin is, as I have said, a sin which is only saved from being a rebellion against God by the weakness and imperfection of human nature; but it is, in itself, of the same nature as mortal sin: it is an offence against a God who is infinitely holy, and cannot endure iniquity. "Thou art not a God that willest iniquity. Neither shall the wicked dwell near Thee, nor the unjust abide before Thine eyes; Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. v. 5). It is never lawful to commit a sin of any kind, however small it may be, for any purpose whatever. It is no excuse to say that it was done with a good end, to avoid evil or obtain good either for ourselves or for others, no matter how great the evil to be avoided or the good to be obtained may appear to be. Our first duty as creatures is not to offend our Creator and break His Commandments. People sometimes say that they were obliged by

circumstances to do something wrong; that they could not help it, and so forth. This, however, is not the case. We can never be compelled to do wrong, or justified in doing it. It is true that circumstances often change the nature of an action. Some Commandments do not bind in cases of great necessity, so that what would otherwise be wrong, becomes right in the particular circumstances; but if an action is really and necessarily sinful, it may not be done for any cause whatever.

Venial sin is a great danger on account of the multitude of sins which those who are careless about it commit. "How much more is a man abominable and unprofitable who drinketh iniquity like water" (Job xv. 16). A man who has habits of venial sin, which he does not take pains to avoid, may be said to "drink iniquity like water." It is so quickly and so easily committed: thoughts, words, and actions; the duties we owe to God, and the duties we owe to our neighbours; what we do, and what we leave undone; all combine in presenting to us occasions of sin if we are not walking circumspectly. Offences are very easily committed, and are past in a moment, but one day they will appear against us. This life, we know, is the seed-time of eternity, and everything that we do is a seed cast into the ground to bear some fruit in eternity. We cast the grains upon the earth and they disappear, but we shall find them again at the hour of death. The thought which crosses the mind, the word that comes forth from the lips, the action which is finished almost as soon as begun—have all gone out into eternity, and, in a sense, have become eternal and immutable. We do actions in a moment which ages will not destroy. A man yields to temptation—it is for eternity: he does a good deed or utters a fervent prayer—it is for eternity. The sin, the pleasure of which passes in a moment, if it is not washed away by penance, or cannot be atoned for by punishment, remains, for ever attached to the soul of the sinner for his torment and misery—and, on the other hand, every act of justice or charity, or piety which I do, may procure for me an increase of happiness for all eternity. Oh, my dear brethren, if we could only realize the con-

sequences of all that we now do, how differently we should all act!

We may, however, distinguish two very different sorts of venial sin: the sin which necessarily comes from the weakness of human nature, and the sin which is either a deliberate disregard of small things, or is the result of culpable negligence. No man can keep out of all venial sin, without a special grace. He may, indeed, avoid any particular sin, but he cannot go on for any long time without offending in something: "for in many things we all offend," and "if we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (St. James iii. 2; 1 St. John i. 8).

The greatest saints all committed some sin, and it is impossible for us to avoid it. The Church declares it to be a matter of faith that no one, except by a special privilege, such as was granted to the Blessed Virgin Mary, can avoid all sin, even venial sin, in the course of his life" (Council of Trent, Sess. 6, Can. 23). Such sins are like the almost imperceptible dust which falls on a polished surface; if allowed to accumulate, it soon becomes a serious disfigurement; but, if carefully and regularly removed, it leaves no stain behind it. Sin of this kind belongs to the imperfect nature of mortal man, and God allows it to remain, even in the greatest saints, to be a constant humiliation, and spur to exertion, "for virtue is made perfect in infirmity" (2 Cor. xii. 9). The sins into which the saints fell only made them more humble, and more dependent upon God, since their falls showed them how weak they were, and how great was the necessity of being watchful and constantly relying upon God's grace. They washed away these imperfections by daily tears, and by that constant spirit of Penance, which is almost an essential quality of earthly sanctity; they entered daily, by prayer and meditation, into the Divine Presence, and so were thoroughly cleansed, each day, from the unavoidable frailties of their human nature.

The Prophet Isaias found himself in the presence of the Most High God, and heard the seraphim crying out

one to another: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts, all the earth is full of His glory," and he said: "Wo is me, because I have held my peace: because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people that hath unclean lips, and I have seen with my eyes the King, the Lord of hosts. And one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a live coal which he had taken with the tongs off the altar, and he touched my mouth and said, Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed" (Isaias vi. 3). The exercise of the Presence of God was to the saints the burning fire by which the sins resulting from human frailty were taken away.

Very different from these are the venial sins which men in general commit. They sin venially indeed, but it is not merely from the weakness of human nature, but because they do not care much about being perfect—perhaps do not even *wish* to be much better than they are—because they make light of small things, and are not at all sensitive as to the evil of offending God, so that they are slothful and supine in His service. Very often venial sins are committed with great deliberation, and show a fearful amount of malice and coldness of heart. You find people who, so long as they think they can escape the terrible penalties of mortal sin, and, as they think, keep out of the danger of eternal damnation, do not seem to care how much they offend God.

Such people do not make any attempt to break off habits of sin, which they know to be displeasing to God; they go on, day after day, for years, perhaps, committing the same faults, and hardly even think of making a serious effort to overcome the habit. They console themselves by trying to persuade their consciences that there is nothing very serious in what they do, and that, perhaps, some day or other they will set about doing better, but in the meantime they keep on offending God perpetually. For instance, men will go on in the habit of little lies, trifling excuses, or petty vanities, and taking part in small deceits and dishonesties, or they will indulge themselves in unkind talk about their neighbours, or they

will constantly be irreverent and indevout in their behaviour to Almighty God, and neglect His service; or they will give way to self-indulgence, and to petty malice, and be obstinate and wrongheaded in a thousand ways, so that it may be said of them: *Semper hi errant corde*—they are always wrong in heart.

Let us consider the very serious nature of such venial sins as these. In the first place, is it so sure that they are always venial? The habit of mind which leads people to act in this selfish, ungenerous way, very easily makes them go a little farther, and then conceals from them what they have done. Can conscience be expected to be very delicate and discriminating when you are acting up to it so very little? If you go on in this way, you cannot have much of that "fear of the Lord, which is the beginning of wisdom." What! really fear God and go on treating Him so! "*Confige timore tuo carnes meas*"—"Pierce through my flesh with Thy fear" (Ps. cxviii. 120). It would be impossible for anyone whose heart was really pierced through with the holy fear of God, to go on sinning in this deliberate, heartless manner.

Even if such a sinner never mistakes between mortal and venial sin, he is in great danger of being led away much further than he intended, and so crossing the fatal line. Every sin he commits makes him so much weaker, and decreases in some degree the grace of God within him; the very tone of mind in which he lives must almost dry up the source of grace within him, so that the barrier between him and destruction is constantly diminishing. "He that contemneth small things shall fall by little and little" (Ecclus. xix. 1). A ship founders at sea; it is because the water has entered by degrees till it could no longer float, and if the smallest leak were entirely neglected the shipwreck would certainly follow; a house falls, but every one knows that the fall has been prepared, for a long time, by the gradual decay and destruction of the walls and timbers; so, when a man falls into crime, it is generally a result which is but the termination of a long course of negligence about small things. The complete turning away from God is

but the natural result of a system of coldness and indifference in His service.

Neglected venial sin, therefore, is a terrible danger, for, as the Catechism says, "it displeases God, and often leads to mortal sin." But, even independently of this danger, it is a great evil, because by it we contract a great debt to the justice of God, which some day we shall have to pay. God will render to every man according to his works, and for every sin that a man commits some punishment is due; who, then, can tell how great will be the punishment laid up for him who has gone on all his life "storing up wrath against the last days" (St. James v. 3)?

Our Lord says: "Be at agreement with thy adversary betimes, whilst thou art in the way with him; lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 25). Now, a man who is really careless about venial sin, not only keeps on, day after day, adding to his debt, but he is in such a state that he can hardly do anything in satisfaction of it. As I have said, men cannot altogether help falling into venial sin; but, then, on the other hand, they are able easily to obtain pardon, and to escape from the liability which they have incurred by it. Our Lord has left in our hands all the treasures of His Passion for the payment of our debt, and His Precious Blood is infinitely more than enough to wash away all the sins of men, and pay all their debts. But, then, it is necessary that we should do something ourselves to obtain the benefit of the pardon purchased for us.

To obtain the pardon of our sins, two things are necessary: first, to be in such dispositions as to render pardon possible; and, secondly, to use the means our Lord has appointed for conferring pardon—that is, by which the merits of His Precious Blood may be applied to wash away sin. The conditions which render the pardon of actual sin possible are, sorrow for the sins already committed, and a real purpose of amendment. In this respect

mortal and venial sin are alike—and we cannot conceive that God will pardon any sin, great or small, without some repentance for the past, and a will to avoid sin for the future.

In addition to these dispositions, our Lord has appointed a Sacrament for the forgiveness of sin, which is the proper, and, where it can be applied, the necessary means for the remission of mortal sin. He has put all mortal sin under the "power of the keys," when He says: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained." All mortal sins, therefore, unless from accidental circumstances, must be forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance; but venial sin can be forgiven much more easily. It is, indeed, the matter of confession: if you confess the venial sins you have committed, with proper repentance and purpose of amendment, and receive absolution, it is without doubt the best way of obtaining pardon. You are not, however, obliged to confess venial sins, and there are a great many other ways in which they may be washed away. A good act of contrition, such as you ought to say with your prayers—or any good work which you do, or any fervent act of charity to God, is sufficient, through the merits of Christ, to obtain pardon of the venial sins. "Many sins are forgiven her, because she has loved much"—and if we love much we shall easily wash away our sins, however many they may be.

The question then arises as to how it is that, when so many facilities for the pardon of sin are provided, people can go on all their lives adding to their debt and never cancelling any part of it? The answer is a very simple one: it is because, with regard to venial sin, a great number of people are so disposed that pardon is impossible. They are *not* sorry for them in any real sense: that is, they may be annoyed to find themselves doing the same things over and over again, but they are not sufficiently displeased with their sins to take any trouble to get rid of them. Have they any purpose of amendment? Such a purpose means not merely saying: I

want to be better, and I intend never to do these things again; but it means a will to take the steps necessary for keeping out of them in future. A large number of people have not any such will, and therefore have not the necessary purpose of amendment.

This being the case, they spend their whole lives in the same state—going to confession from time to time, and making most fervent acts of contrition; but their venial sins are never forgiven. Their purposes of amendment are most sweeping, as far as words go; but there is a kind of secret understanding with the enemy that these pet failings are not included, and therefore they are not forgiven.

This seems a very bad case, and yet it is very common with us all. How many years, my dear brethren, have you known that you were subject to certain failings—faults of temper, sins of omission, and so forth? Have you ever really set about overcoming them? How many such faults have you eradicated?—or, if that seems too much to ask, how many have you seriously attempted to get rid of? No doubt, you mention them when you go to confession; but you live on with them, all the same, and they seem quite safe from all the acts of contrition and good resolution you make every day. And yet there is very little doubt that, if you really tried for one month to get rid of a particular habit, you could overcome it in great part, if not entirely. Can you expect our Lord to accept such sorrow and purpose of amendment, and to forgive you the sins which you keep on cherishing in this manner?

In addition to the guilt of sin, there is a debt due to the justice of God; but we cannot pay our debt till the guilt itself has been wiped out. St. Paul says: "I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up those things that were wanting of the sufferings of Christ, in my flesh, for His body, which is the Church" (Col. i. 24). In what sense is anything wanting in the sufferings of Christ? Nothing, as far as their supreme efficacy is concerned, since the value of all we can do is from them, for "all our sufficiency" is from Him; but something is wanted on our part, that we may dispose ourselves to re-

ceive His grace, and may take the share of satisfaction which God's justice requires from us personally.

Even when the guilt of sin has been forgiven, the justice of God generally requires that something shall be done by the sinner as a satisfaction and atonement. It is not that God delights in our suffering, but it is the fire that purifies the works of men. "Every man's work shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 13). We have an illustration of the dealings of God with sinners in the case of King David, when we committed a great sin; he repented of his sin and bewailed it most bitterly; but something more was required. "And Nathan said to David, The Lord also hath taken away thy sin: thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die" (2 Kings xii. 13).

In some way or other, sin has to be atoned for, and something will be asked, even of those who repent, in addition to what our Lord has done for us all. This atonement may be made in many ways, as God will accept almost anything that we offer in this life in Christ's name and for His sake: it may be made by patient suffering, or by acts of love and devotion. Again, our atonement may be in this world, or in the world to come—since, as our Lord tells us, we may "be at agreement with our adversary betimes whilst we are in the way with him;" whereas, if we neglect this, the atonement must be made by being cast into prison, "until we pay the last farthing."

This naturally leads us to the subject of purgatory. There are numbers who make no sort of atonement in this life for the sins they commit. Sometimes it pleases God to send us crosses and sufferings which may serve as the fitting punishment of sin, but sometimes He does

not do so. Moreover, the pains and troubles of life are, only too frequently, borne in such a manner as to increase the debt which we owe to God, instead of diminishing it; or it may be that people are so much wedded to sin, or so careless about it, that they cannot even begin to make an atonement for it. It is clear, then, that if God is to render to every one according to his works, it must be in most cases when this life is over, and the time of trial is finished.

The Catechism tells us that purgatory is a "place where souls suffer for a time on account of their sins," and that "those souls go to purgatory that depart this life in venial sin, or that have not fully paid the debt of temporal punishment due to those sins of which the guilt has been forgiven." For two reasons, then, we may go to purgatory—on account of the many sins of carelessness and weakness which we now commit, for which we never sufficiently repent, and which we take little pains to avoid or atone for; and to satisfy God for great sins for which we have repented. We have repented, and "the Lord has taken away the sin for Christ's sake, and we shall not die," but justice has in no way been satisfied for the evil that we have done. It is beautifully expressed in the words of Cardinal Newman's hymn, in which he speaks of the souls of the faithful departed:

> "For daily falls, for pardoned crime,
> They joy to undergo
> The shadow of Thy cross sublime,
> The remnant of Thy woe."

Let us conclude our consideration of venial sin by thinking of the state of the souls of the faithful in purgatory. They are called, in the language of the Church, "the holy souls," because they have departed this life in the grace and favour of God. The have been judged and accepted by Him, and will be happy with Him for ever: they have seen God face to face, and, from that moment, all affection to sin has for ever disappeared, and they love God with a love that men on earth cannot conceive; and yet they have to suffer till they have "paid the last farthing." They suffer with the greatest patience, and lov-

ingly bear all that God's justice has decreed to make them fit for that kingdom to which nothing defiled can enter. And yet, in spite of their holiness and patience, the severity and duration of their punishment, we have every reason to believe, are very terrible. The time for mercy is past for them, and the time for justice is come, and all their love, and all their patience, are unavailing to soften the severity of this justice—they must now "pay the last farthing."

Nothing can give us a more vivid idea of the evil of venial sin than the thought of these holy souls, suffering in hope deferred, till they have drunk the chalice drop by drop, and atoned for every idle word, "letting the fire wear out their stains and worshipping God's purity."

What would those holy souls say about the evil of venial sin? Would they not tell us that no pains can be too great to avoid venial sin, and to atone for those offences into which human frailty has led us?

"Help, Lord, the souls which Thou hast made,
The souls to Thee so dear,
In prison for the debt unpaid
Of sins committed here.
Those holy souls, they suffer on,
Resigned in heart and will,
Until Thy high behest is done,
And justice has its fill."

—*Cardinal Newman.*

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXIX.

The Witness to Christ.

"You shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts i. 8).

Our Lord chose out His twelve apostles, and made them His special companions and friends. They were to be the first priests, through whom a Christian priesthood, with the character and power of order, was to be established on earth, and they were to be the channels by which sacramental grace was to be distributed amongst men. But, my dear brethren, they were to have another office quite distinct from this, and it was for this office specially that they were separated from their brethren and formed into a college, or company, or corporate body. They were to be the permanent witness to our Lord, not only for the few years that they were to remain on earth, and for the countries they could visit personally, but for all ages and for the whole world. To bear witness to our Lord personally, they needed no particular office or organization; every one who had seen and heard Jesus in the flesh would be a witness in this way; but they were to be witnesses to all nations: "Going, therefore, teach all nations," and their witness was to continue till the end of time. "I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20).

To enable the apostles to be witnesses to Him through all time, our Lord formed them into a corporate body, which was to continue to exist when the original members were removed by death. When Judas fell away, the apostles chose St. Mathias to take his place, and, as the Church grew, other members were taken into this body, not, indeed, with the special privileges of the apostles, but to form part of that great teaching society

which was to be a permanent witness to the truths our Lord had come to teach.

St. Paul says to his disciple, St. Timothy: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. i. 13). Without some special institution for the purpose, it would have been impossible for men to keep this "form of sound words" about our Lord and His doctrine. Christ might, indeed, have provided a witness to Himself in other ways, but what He in fact did, was to make the apostles, and those who succeeded them in their office, witnesses "even to the uttermost part of the earth."

The ninth article of the Creed is "the Holy Catholic Church, the communion of saints," and this is a subject which requires careful consideration. It is most important that all Catholics should understand the doctrine of the authority of the Church, and the principles on which it is founded, and it is particularly necessary in our own time and country. The Church is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15), and from it alone can any certain knowledge of faith be obtained. This is not wonderful; it is not likely that any one can learn the faith, except by the mode of teaching which our Lord instituted—that is, by the teaching and authority of the apostles and their successors. If you take away this foundation appointed by Christ, faith becomes a mere changing, floating opinion—a house built upon a quicksand. In such a case people may, indeed, have opinions, but in general, they can have no reasonable ground of certainty as to their being right.

This is only too well illustrated by the ever-changing varieties of opinion held by those out of the Church. In every direction we find good and intelligent people "tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine," and utterly unable to agree as to the elementary doctrines of the Christian faith.

St. Peter says that you are to be "ready always to satisfy everyone that asketh you a reason for that hope

which is in you" (1 St. Peter iii. 15). But those out of the Church are unable to give any such reason. They can say that they think their opinions right; but, if you would ask what authority they have for these opinions, and how they come to know that they are right, and their neighbours wrong, they have nothing whatever to say. These are their views because they *are* their views, but, commonly speaking, they hardly even profess to have any reliable authority, or any logical ground for believing them.

It is most important, then, for all Catholics to be well instructed in the principle of their faith, and to see clearly that they differ from those outside the Church, not in mere matters of detail, but in the very foundation on which their faith is built. If they do not understand this fully, they can have no intellectual hold on the faith, and their religion is like the house built on the sand: "the rains came, and winds blew, and the house fell, because it had no foundation;" and so their faith will fall if ever perplexities or difficulties should come upon them.

The "Catholic Church" is used in two senses. It may mean all the faithful of Christ throughout the universe, or it may mean the visible part of that Universal Church, the Church militant on earth. In its widest sense, it is made up of three parts: the Church triumphant in heaven; the Church militant on earth; and the Church suffering in purgatory. It contains the countless legions of angels, rising rank above rank, around the throne of God, angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, principalities and powers, by their beauty and variety reflecting in some faint degree the infinite beauty and grandeur of their Creator; it contains the rich and varied companies of saints whom this earth has sent to join that blessed society, and above and beyond all in beauty and glory is that peerless Mother of God, whose Divine maternity has crowned her Queen of them all.

"See! forth from the gates, like a bridal array,
Come the princes of heaven—how bravely they shine!
There are millions of saints in their rank and degrees,

And each with a beauty and crown of his own.
And there, far outnumbering the sands of the seas,
The nine rings of angels encircle the throne."

—*Father Faber.*

Next to the Church triumphant, comes the Church militant on earth. It includes, as actual members, all who have become its members by Baptism, and have not, by their own act, cut themselves off from its communion, and, as possible members, every human being on earth. It is like that great "multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues," which St. John saw "standing before the throne in the sight of the Lamb" (Apoc. vii. 9). It is, indeed, the earthly counterpart of that blessed crowd, and day by day, hour by hour, men, women, and children of all "nations and tribes and peoples and tongues" go forth to swell the numbers of that countless host.

And, last, there is the kingdom of the holy souls, the Church suffering, in which the "spouses of Christ," who have been redeemed by His Blood, are waiting patiently till their time of banishment is over.

These three parts, different as they are in condition, are but one Church, united together by the closest of bonds, and specially united by being under One Head. "The Head of the Catholic Church," the Catechism tells us, "is Jesus Christ our Lord."

Our Lord, in His human nature, is the Head of the whole Church, and every individual of that Church is united to Him, as the member is to its Head—since He "is the image of the Invisible God, the first-born of every creature: For in Him were all things created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible; whether thrones or dominations, or principalities or powers, all things were created by Him and in Him, and He is before all, and by Him all things consist, and He is the Head of the body of the Church, who is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in all things He may hold the primacy" (Col. i. 15).

Jesus, God and Man, is the supreme Head, whom the Father has placed over all His children, "setting Him

on His right hand in the heavenly places, above all principality, and power, and virtue and domination, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And He hath subjected all things under His feet, and hath made Him head over all the Church, which is His body and the fulness of Him who is filled, all in all" (Eph. i. 20).

To the Church in Heaven He is present in His beauty and glory, filling all hearts with joy by the very sight of Him: He is in the midst of the Church on earth, fighting our battles for us and with us, succouring us in time of need, giving courage to the weak and binding up the wounded: He cheers us by His constant Sacramental Presence, and His voice is ever heard in the midst of us, as that of the captain encouraging his soldiers. He is with the suffering souls of the faithful departed—concealing, indeed, His face from them for a time—but still, their only hope—their "refreshment, light, and peace."

It is now time to speak of the Catholic Church in its other sense, that is, as meaning only the visible Church on earth—and this is the sense in which the words are commonly used. What is this Catholic Church? What is its definition, and its essence? It is strange how seldom we can get an answer to this question. We hear about the Church, and Church principles in every direction, and we hear people calling themselves Catholics and professing to be members of the Catholic Church, but, out of the Communion of the Roman Church, you cannot get an answer to the simple question: What is the Church? It is not merely that people answer this question incorrectly, but they will not answer it at all: that is, they have grand general and vague ideas, but they cannot make up their minds exactly what they mean by them.

Let us begin by some negations, then, and say what the Church is *not:* it is not a mere collection of individuals, however good, but it is an organized body; "and He gave some apostles, and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the

ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all meet into the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God . . . that we may grow up in Him who is the head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together, by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in charity" (Eph. iv. 10).

It is, then, a structure built up—made of many parts differing in themselves, all supplying something, each contributing in its own way to some common end—that is, it is a carefully organized body of living men. It is not a body containing the righteous only, since our Lord carefully explains to us that His Church on earth shall include both good and bad. It is the field containing wheat and cockle, which grow together, and cannot always be distinguished by the eyes of men. "Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and, in the time of the harvest, I will say to the reapers, Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn" (St. Matt. xiii. 30).

So, again, our Lord compares the Church to a "net cast into the sea, and gathering together all kinds of fishes. Which, when it was filled, they drew out, and, sitting by the shore, they chose out the good into vessels, but the bad they cast forth" (St. Matt. xiii. 47). About this St. Augustine says: "However, as touching the net cast into the sea, and enclosing a great multitude of fishes, both bad and good, we may well understand that by the bad are meant Catholics of bad lives. For the sea is one thing whereby we may understand to be signified the world, and the net another, which seemeth to signify our faith, or the communion of one Church. Between heretics and sinful Catholics there is this difference: that heretics believe a lie, and sinful Catholics believe the truth, but live not as they believe" *(Brev. Lesson, 5th Sunday after Epiphany)*.

A Church, therefore, made up of devout people scattered about everywhere, and not in any visible manner united into one body, is obviously opposed to the idea of

a Church presented to us by our Lord. The Church, moreover, is *not* a body of individuals connected together by the possession of valid orders or sacramental graces. Our Lord, in His kindness and beneficence, has given to His Church both the grace of the Sacraments and the powers of the priesthood, but they were not *necessary* for the Church: that is, He might, if it had been His pleasure to do so, have established a Church in which there were neither orders nor Sacraments. The Church might very well have existed without any of the special powers and graces given by Holy Orders; and, on the other hand, these powers will not make the Church. Instances may be found, without number, in which individuals and bodies of men, with the undoubted possession of valid orders, have clearly fallen away from the Christian Church.

What, then, is the Church? It is a visible corporate body established by our Lord to be the permanent witness to Him, and the constant teacher of His faith to men. It must be endowed, therefore, with all the qualifications necessary for carrying out this work, and it *need* not have any others. The Church, then, in the first place, must be visible and capable of identification. If you cannot find out which is your teacher, it is plain that his teaching is of no use—and an invisible and inaudible witness would clearly be able to prove nothing. The very first quality of the Church, then, is that it must be conspicuous. "You are the light of the world. A city seated on a mountain cannot be hid" (St. Matt. v. 14). Listen to the words in which the prophet Daniel describes the kingdom which Christ was to found: "Thus thou sawest, till a stone was cut out of a mountain, without hands, and it struck the statue upon the feet thereof, that were of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces . . . but the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth." The prophet goes on to describe the great empires that were to succeed each other upon earth, and then says: "But, in the days of those kingdoms, the God of heaven shall set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and

His kingdom shall not be delivered up to another people, and it shall break in pieces, and shall consume all these kingdoms, and itself shall stand for ever" (Dan. ii. 34—44). The stone "cut out of the mountain without hands," which "became a mountain and filled the whole earth," corresponds exactly with the idea of a "city set upon a hill, which cannot be hid," and describes, in the most forcible way, a visible and conspicuous Church, which cannot be missed by those who seek for it.

But, it is not enough for it to be visible for the moment. It must have a history, and be able to say who it is, and where it comes from. A witness must, in the first place, be able to give an account of himself and prove his identity: if he cannot do this satisfactorily, and show how he comes to know, and what right he has to speak, his evidence is of no value. So the Church must not only be visible now, but must be able to trace its history from the times as to which its testimony relates—that is, to our Lord's day.

Besides being conspicuous and unmistakable, to be a teacher and a witness, the Church must have power to speak, and authority to decide: "Cry, cease not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show my people their wicked doings, and the house of Jacob their sins" (Isaias lviii. 1). "Preach the Word in season and out of season: reprove, entreat, rebuke in all patience and doctrine. For there shall come a time when they will not endure sound doctrine, but, according to their own desires, they will heap to themselves teachers having itching ears" (2 Tim. iv. 2). These words, which describe the duty of an individual bishop in the midst of his flock, describe also what must be the office of the Church of God in the world. It must speak, it must bear witness: in season and out of season it must raise its voice amongst men. To do this, it must be a living body: that is, not only a body made up of living men, but a body having a moral life of its own, distinct from that of its individual members. This life, moreover, must be accompanied by such an organization as to enable it to make itself heard; otherwise, it is plain

that it cannot fulfil the purpose for which our Lord established it on earth. It must be heard, too; not in an occasional and intermittent way, but regularly, and whenever its witness is required. If ever the time could come when it ceased to be able to bear witness and to teach, it would cease to exist—because the essential office of the Church, which our Lord established upon earth, is to be witness to Him "even to the uttermost parts of the earth," and to teach all nations. "Going therefore, teach ye all nations: baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, behold, I am with you all days to the consummation of the world" (St. Matt. xxviii. 20). Plainly, teaching is the one great work for which our Lord sent out His apostles and established the Church; and therefore the Church must be the divinely-appointed teacher of men, or it is nothing at all, and can claim no reason of existence upon earth. On the other hand, as it is the teacher appointed by God, all men are bound to hear, and there can be only one excuse for disobedience. If, at the day of Judgment, when the secrets of all hearts are laid bare, and all veils are removed, a man can plead that he did not know the Church, and was unable to find her out and recognize her, he may clear himself from the guilt of rebellion; but no other excuse will avail him. It is not a matter of liking or disliking, but of the submission which a creature owes to its Creator.

"As the Father hath sent me, I also send you"—"All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth." What wider commission could He have given? "As the Father hath sent me"—listen to the voice of the Eternal Father: "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased: hear ye Him." Our Lord sends forth His Church with the full power and authority which belongs to Himself, and identifies Himself, as it were, with those whom He has commissioned to teach in His name: "He that heareth you, heareth me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth me. And he that despiseth me, despiseth Him that sent me" (St. Luke x. 16).

To obey the Church in all things which concern the salvation of our souls is, then, one of the most imperative of all our obligations. If you reverence and obey the pastors of the Church in the performance of their office, it is not an obedience to men, but to God. You do not obey them for themselves, or for any qualities which they may possess, but simply as the organs appointed by God, through whom His will is made known to you: "Obey your prelates, and be subject to them: for they watch as being to render an account of your souls" (Heb. xiii. 17). On the other hand, disobedience to the authority of the Church is disobedience to God.

"They have not rejected thee, but me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Kings viii. 7). This was what Almighty God said to Samuel when the children of Israel came to him, with many specious pretexts and grievances, to demand a king: so with those who are rebellious against the authority of the Church—it is, generally, against God Himself that the rebellion is directed.

Obedience to the teaching of the Church is the one rule of faith to all men. It is not merely for the poor and ignorant, but for rich and poor, learned and ignorant, clergy and laity alike. It is, indeed, the great and the learned to whom the spirit of obedience is most necessary, as they are in the greatest danger of being carried away into error, and most need a guide appointed by Heaven. All that we know of our faith comes to us on the authority of the Church. She is the guide whom we follow over all ways, plain and difficult alike. In some things we fancy we can see our own way easily enough by our own powers, but in the easy places, as well as the difficult, it is on the authority of our guide, and not on our own judgment, that we must really rest. The ultimate reason for our faith is that God has taught us by His Holy Church. We may have a thousand other arguments to convince us of any truth, but the real ground for believing it must be, not our own reason, but the authority of God speaking to us in His Church.

This authority, moreover, is always a *present* authority. It is the living voice of the Church of our own day, not

the records of past history, that we have to listen to. When people speak of the authority of the Church, but refer you to the Church of ages gone by, they are not really going by authority, which, of its own nature, is a living thing, but by their own judgment on a dead letter, which cannot speak for itself.

This, then, is the essence of the Catholic Church: to be the divinely-appointed witness and teacher of God's truth upon earth. Those who, by God's mercy, have obtained a knowledge of this divine guide, have received an immense spiritual advantage; they alone have a clear knowledge of the truth, and they alone can really be united in one faith. Without this divine guidance, each man can only have an opinion of his own in spiritual matters; but we have one faith, since we all accept the whole teaching of this one Church, and to us alone are opened the special springs of grace which our Lord has instituted in His Church.

And now let us ask: What are we doing to correspond with this grace which has been bestowed upon us? We certainly shall be judged by our conduct as Catholics, and according to the use we have made of the special advantages with which we have been favoured.

But first let us consider how great ought to be our gratitude to our Lord for making us members of His Church: it is not for any merit of our own, but simply out of the abundance of His own goodness, that He has done so—and we know well that there are thousands more deserving than ourselves whom He allows to wander outside His fold.

"To you it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God: but to them that are without, all things are done in parables" (St. Mark iv. 11).

Our Lord has founded a Church, which He built up by His Passion and "purchased with His own Blood," and filled with His Spirit: this Church He has preserved through all ages by His special providence; and all this, that it might speak to you of Him. He would give to you a clear and plain account of His own divine Person and of His doctrine, and therefore He called you to be a

member of His Church. Our Lord has called you to be one of His sheep, that you might hear His voice plainly, and not in parables: "The sheep hear His voice, and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when He hath let out His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him, because they know His voice" (St. John x. 3). Do not these words give a most accurate description of the spiritual blessings you have received as members of the Catholic Church? Now, why did our Lord give you this special knowledge? "Amen I say to you, that many prophets and just men have desired to see the things that you see, and have not seen them: and to hear the things that you hear, and have not heard them" (St. Matt. xiii. 17). What is expected of you in return for this "excellent knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. iii. 8)?

It would be well, my dear brethren, if we all thought more of the responsibilities which we have as Catholics. Our Lord expects that we should "hear His voice," not only by accurate knowledge, but by ready obedience: He expects that we should listen loyally and humbly to the teaching of His Church: "Unless you become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 4). But the Church is not only appointed to teach us, but has a right to command us in all things concerning the salvation of our souls. If we really appreciated, as we ought to do, the blessing of being members of the Church, we should be very careful in obeying all her precepts. A willing and exact observance of the commands of the Church is the best test of our obedience—and our Lord requires it of us in return for the grace of being members of the Church.

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXX.

The Foundation.

"Other foundation no man can lay but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus" (1 Cor. iii. 11).

The Catholic Church, my dear brethren, is an organized body—that is, it is made up of various ranks and classes. It contains teachers and taught, rulers and ruled, superiors and subordinates of various ranks, and all these joined together so as to constitute one moral body. St. Paul says in a text I have before quoted: "And He gave some apostles and some prophets, and other some evangelists, and other some pastors and doctors, for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ . . . that henceforth we may be no more children tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the wickedness of men, by cunning craftiness by which they lie in wait to deceive; but doing the truth in charity, we may in all things grow up in Him who is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, being compacted and fitly joined together by what every joint supplieth, according to the operation in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body" (Eph. iv. 11).

The Church which is here described is a vast society, containing many different offices and characters, "apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and doctors," each one receiving of our Lord, and built up in Him, so that every joint supplies something, and, in some way, tends to the "perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ." It must have been such an organized society to have been able to exist through all these ages. The Church has seen every change and every calamity that could come upon human

society. The Roman empire sank from grandeur to decay, and the civilized world was broken in pieces and founded anew. Almost every institution in the world was overwhelmed by hordes of barbarians, and yet the Church endured. Nothing could so endure but a living organization, able constantly to repair its losses, and spring up again as fast as it was trampled down.

The Church, then, is a living body—that is, it is a collection of human beings, possessing an organization that will enable it to speak and act as one body; and, moreover, with an inherent vitality. It is not enough that it should be organized, but it must have an inward principle of life to hold it together, in spite of all the dissolving influences of the world around. External pressure, human laws and institutions, might keep it together for a time, in one country and state of society, but nothing but a deep-seated principle of life could preserve it through all ages, and throughout the world.

It is this vitality that gives to the Church its unchangeable nature. It is sometimes made a reproach to the Catholic Church that it never changes in its constitution and principles of action—it does not go with the times, or conform to the "spirit of the age," as people say. This is, however, contained in the very idea of the Church. A living, organized body cannot change—that is, it may be educated, it may grow and develope, and can accommodate itself, in a certain way, to the circumstances in which it is placed, but it cannot change its nature, or its principles of existence. External violence may destroy it, but can never alter the essential character of its being.

So it is with the Church; it received a certain constitution from our Lord, who established it; and what He made it, it must ever remain. It is not like a temporal kingdom, which can be revolutionized, and take, now one form of government, and by and by another, which can be monarchical to-day, and republican to-morrow, according to the will of men; but it must always continue to have the same character and form of government that our Lord first gave it. And what is its constitution?

It is not a republic, or a limited monarchy, but it is "one fold and one Shepherd." It has one Supreme Shepherd in heaven, and one supreme ruler, to represent Him, upon earth. Our Lord takes to Himself the title of Shepherd, as that which best combines the idea of tenderness and care with that of supreme and absolute authority. He assumes this title for Himself in the most emphatic manner, and with equal emphasis bestows it upon His apostles. "I am the Good Shepherd. The good shepherd giveth his life for his sheep." "I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me." "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth, and the sheep hear his voice, and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out: and when he hath let out his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, because they know his voice" (St. John x. 11, 14, 2).

Our Lord was the Good Shepherd, who gave His life for His sheep. He was to go before them and lead them; and their one duty was to hear His voice and follow Him. His office of Shepherd He gave, in the most emphatic manner, to the apostle whom He chose out to exercise His authority on earth. "When, therefore, they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these? He saith to Him: Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He saith to him: Feed my lambs. . . . He saith to him the third time: Simon, son of John, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because He said to Him the third time: Lovest thou me? and he said to Him: Lord, Thou knowest all things, Thou knowest that I love Thee. He said to Him: Feed my sheep" (St. John xxi. 15). He was to be the shepherd of the whole flock, both lambs and sheep; he was to lead, to rule, and to teach the whole Church, young and old, pastors and people.

Again, our Lord was the foundation of His Church: He was "the stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: whosoever shall fall upon that stone shall be bruised, and upon whomsoever it shall fall, it shall grind him to powder" (St. Luke xx.

17). He was the rock upon which the Church was built, and on no other foundation can it stand: "Other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus"—and the structure built up upon this foundation must be unchangeable, as He is. This office, too, He delegated to St. Peter, that, as he was to be the visible shepherd taking the place of the invisible Shepherd, the "Prince of Pastors," so he should be the visible foundation-stone, representing the eternal and invisible rock which was the head of the corner. "And I say to thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (St. Matt. xvi. 18).

This brings us to speak of the Pope as the head of the Church. The Catechism, after saying that our Lord is the Head of the Catholic Church, goes on: "The Church has a visible head on earth, the Bishop of Rome, who is the Vicar of Christ." "The Bishop of Rome is the head of the Church, because he is the successor of St. Peter, whom Christ appointed to be the head of the Church." Our Lord and the Pope are both called the "Head of the Church," but in a widely different sense. Our Lord is the Head of the whole Church, in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory; whereas the Pope is the head only of that part which is on earth—the Church Militant. Our Lord is Head of the Church by His own right, and the Pope is the head as our Lord's vicar—that is, as holding our Lord's place visibly upon earth. He rules, not by any right of His own, but by delegation from His Master: he has no independent authority, but exercises the authority of our Lord on earth, in His name, and by His commission. And there is another and even wider distinction between them: Our Lord is the Head of the Church in the sense that to the Church in general, and in particular to each individual soul, He is All in All: He is the only Mediator and Saviour of all; He is the Judge of all, of whose fulness all have received, who alone heals and sanctifies all; of whom all must spiritually be members; "and all drank the same spiritual drink, and they drank of the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock

was Christ" (1 Cor. x. 4). In these senses our Lord's Headship is incommunicable: He was Head of the Church in this way whilst He was on earth, and He is Head, for ever and ever, in heaven, and no creature can share the office with Him. The Pope is head in one respect only—that is, that He has the office of visible shepherd, and foundation: he is the visible teacher and centre of authority. Whilst our Lord was upon earth, in addition to His eternal and invisible Headship, He exercised the office of Visible Teacher and Guide to His apostles; but when He had withdrawn Himself and would no longer be visibly in the midst of them, since all communities must have some visible head, He made St. Peter, and his successors after him, the centre of union and authority upon earth. Our Lord, therefore, is Head of the Church in an unrestricted sense, and by His own right, whereas the Pope is its head only for the external purpose of being visible teacher and ruler in His place. The Catechism says: "I know that Christ appointed St. Peter to be the head of the Church, because Christ said to Him, Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And to thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven." These are the words in which our Lord conferred this great prerogative on St. Peter, and they are explained to us by the Catholic Church. The immediate way in which we know the office and authority of the Pope is by the teaching of the Catholic Church. The Church is the witness appointed by our Lord to teach us all truth, and must first teach us her own constitution and government, and it is from her voice, therefore, that we learn the power that our Lord has given to her visible head.

We know that our Lord appointed St. Peter, and his successors after him, to be His vicars and Divinely-appointed rulers of His Church, by the constant usage and express teaching of the Church; but the texts quoted tell us when, and in what terms, our Lord gave this commission. He entrusted His authority to St. Peter in three very remarkable figures of speech: He made him the

foundation of the house, the keeper of the keys, and the shepherd of the flock, and, in addition to these figures, He gave him a direct and express commission which contained in it the very same power and authority which the figures implied.

Let us dwell upon these figures for a moment, my dear brethren, as they will best bring home to our minds the sort of authority which our Lord entrusted to the visible head of His Church. "On this rock I will build my Church." He made St. Peter the rock on which His *own* Church—"my Church"—was to be built—the very Church of which He was the foundation, and of which there could be "no other foundation than that which was laid, Christ Jesus." By these words, He identifies Himself with St. Peter, and shows that it is in His strength and firmness that St. Peter is the rock. He compares His Church to a house, such as that He speaks of when He says, "And the rain fell and the floods came, and the winds blew, and they beat upon that house and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock" (St. Matt. vii. 25).

Now, let us see what office He gives to St. Peter by making him the foundation. The foundation of a house is the centre of union which keeps every part together. Either directly or indirectly, everything rests on the foundation, and nothing can be said to form a part of the house which does not in some way depend upon it. By this figure, then, my dear brethren, our Lord teaches us the absolute necessity of being united to the see of Peter.

To be a part of the Catholic Church, every Bishop must be in communion with the Pope; every priest, by the fact of his dependence on his Bishop, is in the same communion; and every individual Catholic is in communion with his own pastor, so that each one can show how he rests on the foundation our Lord has laid for His Church. The faith of the Church rests upon this foundation, and not only its faith, but its discipline. What most corresponds to the foundation of a house in a community of living men, is clearly the central government. It is this which unites men into one body, and keeps them

together, and it is this on which all order and discipline rests; with a strong government, the society is at peace, whilst with a weak one it totters, like the house built on the sand. To correspond, therefore, with our Lord's simile, the Pope must be, as he is, the supreme authority over all parts of the Church.

Our Lord, moreover, makes him the bearer of the keys. "I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in heaven" (St. Matt. xvi. 19). Now, these words may be taken in two senses: they may be understood literally of that sacramental power of forgiving and retaining sins, which our Lord gave to St. Peter, and also to the other apostles, by which heaven is opened and closed in reality; or they may be taken as signifying the supreme authority which our Lord conferred upon St. Peter alone.

The keys represent the royal dignity; he is the ruler of the city who bears its keys, and when the city is taken by one more mighty, the keys are offered to the conqueror in token of submission. Just as our Lord is by right the foundation, so is He the true bearer of the keys, and it is His own office that He is entrusting to Peter in these words. Of our Lord the Prophet Isaias foretells: "I will lay the key of the House of David upon His shoulder, and He shall open, and none shall shut; and He shall shut, and none shall open" (Isaias xxii. 22). In these words are foretold our Lord's royal authority; the "key of the House of David," which was to be laid upon His shoulder, means the supreme power which belongs to Him. "All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth, and this power, as far as external rule goes, He delegated to St. Peter, by making him the keeper of the keys.

The Church is a house and it is a city, but our Lord compares it also to a fold, of which He is the Shepherd: "And other sheep I have that are not of this fold; them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice, and there shall be one fold and one shepherd" (St. John x. 16).

No comparison can more aptly describe the Catholic Church; the plain wall of demarcation which surrounds it, the door of the sheep-fold, by which alone it can be entered, the privileges of the sheep who are there folded, and the tenderness of the shepherd who watches over it, all tell us what our Lord meant His Church to be. The title of the Good Shepherd, too, is the one in which Jesus most delights; and, in its full sense, it is incommunicable. No one but our Lord can lay down His life for the salvation of the sheep. No one but He can say, "I know mine, and mine know me." He alone is the Good Shepherd who "leaves the ninety-nine in the desert, and goes after that which was lost till He finds it, and when He has found it lays it upon His shoulder rejoicing," and can say, "rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost" (St. Luke xv. 4). All this belongs only to the power of God, and the most that any man can do is to be a humble instrument in God's hands. Nevertheless, our Lord gives even this, His favourite title, to St. Peter, in order to make it plain that he is to be the ruler of the Church. "Simon, son of John, lovest thou me more than these; feed my lambs, feed my lambs, feed my sheep."

Let us consider how great is the authority contained in these words. In one sense, as I have said, our Lord alone must always be the shepherd of each soul; but in another, He has entrusted His authority to St. Peter and the Bishops of Rome, his successors. He has appointed them over the entire fold, to feed the whole flock, and in this commission to feed is contained full and complete power to teach, to rule and to lead. Every one who is a member of Christ's fold is, by that very fact, subjected to the authority of the appointed shepherd; every teacher in that fold must be in subordination to his supreme teaching authority; and he who cuts himself off from the shepherd, at once ceases to belong to the fold.

There is no place in the Church of God except for those who are in communion with him to whom our Lord has committed the supreme rule. As St. Jerome writes to Pope Damasus: "Following no chief but

Christ, I am joined in communion with your Holiness, that is, with the Chair of Peter. Upon that rock I know that the Church is built. Whosoever eats the Lamb out of this house is profane. If anyone be not in the ark of Noah, he will perish whilst the deluge prevaileth" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. ii. p. 78). This was the faith of the Church in St. Jerome's time, twelve hundred years ago, and it is the faith of the Church now; to be in the fold of Christ you must be under the rule of the shepherd He has appointed.

It is not the Church that appoints him to be head; the house does not make its own foundation, nor do the sheep appoint their own shepherd. The master of the house lays the foundation, and the owner of the sheep appoints the shepherd to take care of them. All other powers in the Church are, in some way, the work of men, and are matters of arrangement and ecclesiastical law. Bishoprics are established, and their boundaries are marked out, as the Church grows. What was, in one century, a great and flourishing Christian Church, is but a wilderness in another. The sub-divisions of the flock, and the degrees of powers which each pastor possesses, are in constant change. Provinces, dioceses, parishes are established and are changed, but before all these, and above them all, is the one ecclesiastical authority which Christ appointed. This alone cannot change; it has received nothing from the Church, and the Church can take nothing from it.

And now there is one more word of our Lord's to consider. He had constituted the supreme authority by these emphatic figures of speech, by making St. Peter foundation, key-bearer, and shepherd; but that was not enough. "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not, and thou, being once converted, confirm thy brethren" (St. Luke xxii. 31). Here we have a repetition, in plain terms, of what our Lord says in other words: "The gates of hell shall not prevail" against His Church. Satan hath desired to have it, his forces are raging around it,

but he shall not prevail. The Church's safety shall be in the rock on which it is built. I have prayed for thee; *thou* shalt keep away the enemy, that he may not sift as wheat thee and thy brethren.

These words contain two things: the promise of a perpetual assistance—that a Divine hand shall ever uphold Peter in the person of his successors, as it once upheld himself on the stormy sea of Galilee; and a commission to confirm others. But, in itself, this commission includes the grant of supreme authority. If Christ has given to Peter a commission to confirm, who shall venture to say that he may not interfere?—who can lawfully say that he is going beyond the limits of his authority? Are those who are to be confirmed and strengthened, whilst Satan is storming around—are they to dictate to the power that succours them, how it shall act? Why should our Lord give such a promise? Why should He pray for Peter that his faith should not fail, if He did not mean to make him the instrument by which the faith was to be preserved unsullied, if He had not meant to lay upon him the charge of all his brethren?

These direct, unfigurative words, then, strengthen and confirm the commission which was given to Peter in the various figures which our Lord had used, and would make plain their meaning, if they admitted of any doubt.

I now come to speak of a part of the Pope's prerogative which is especially interesting at the present day. The Catechism says: "The Pope is infallible," and "When I say that the Pope is infallible, I mean that, as shepherd and teacher of all Christians, the Pope cannot err when he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church. The Papal Infallibility is a matter of faith, which all Catholics are bound to believe. It was defined by the Vatican Council, the last of all the general councils.

This is the form of the Council's decree: The Roman Pontiff, when he speaks *ex-Cathedra*—that is, when in the performance of his office of pastor and teacher of all Christians, in virtue of his supreme apostolic authority, he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held

by the Universal Church, possesses, by the Divine assistance promised to him in Blessed Peter, that same infallibility, which the Divine Redeemer willed His Church to possess in defining doctrine about faith or morals; and, therefore, such definitions of the Roman Pontiff are irreformable of themselves, and not from the consent of the Church. If any one presume to contradict this, our definition—which God forbid—let him be anathema."

Now, let us consider what this "infallibility" means; but, first, what does it *not* mean? It is necessary to speak of this, on account of the very wild ideas that Protestants often have on the subject. It does *not* mean that the Pope is *impeccable*—that is, that he cannot do wrong. In that respect he is like all other Christians, though we cannot doubt that he receives great and special graces from God. It does *not* mean that everything that the Pope does is the wisest and most judicious course that could be taken; it does *not* mean that what he says as a preacher or a writer is necessarily free from error; it does not even mean that in his office of supreme ecclesiastical judge, he may not be mistaken. It means that when he has to decide, as supreme head of the Church, what is, or is not, the true doctrine of the Church He is, by God's assistance, preserved from error.

He is infallible as head of the Church—that is, he is the divinely-appointed organ of the Church's infallibility: it is not as if the Pope had one infallibility, and the Church another, but the Church's infallibility can only be brought into action by the Pope—either in a general council, acting with the other Bishops, or alone.

The infallibility of the Pope has been pronounced an article of faith in our own day. It is not as if a moment's practical doubt on the question had ever existed in the Church; but, up to that time, there had been different theories as to *how* the Pope was infallible. The Gallican party maintained—and for a time the opinion was tolerated in the Church—that the infallible certainty of the Pope's decree depended, not on his authority only, but on his decree being accepted by the body the Church. The Pope's decree always *was* accepted by the Church, and it

was not tolerated that any one should appeal from his decision, but still they thought a case *might* arise in which the Church would reject the Pope's judgment. That idea is now condemned, and it is decided that the Pope's infallibility does *not* come from the consent of the Church, but is directly given by our Lord.

It may seem strange that such a decision is only now given—at the end of so many ages—but it is not so in reality. If there had been any *practical* doubt, the Church could not have gone on for a day, but the last thing a settled government does is to make theories as to its own power. If the faithful had not known whether they were, or were not, to accept the Pope's judgment as the voice of God, there must at once have been anarchy—and the fact that there never has been a disturbance or question about the Papal power, but that the theory of it was finally settled in the midst of profound tranquillity, is, in itself, one of the strongest possible proofs of the Divine origin, and universal acceptance, of that power.

It is, indeed, necessarily contained in the headship given by our Lord: a foundation which *may* give way, and turn out at last to be only sand, is not the rock promised by our Lord: a shepherd who may occasionally lead his flock astray, and requires to be put right, from time to time, by his own sheep, is not the guide promised by the Good Shepherd. If the faith of Peter himself is liable to fail, he cannot confirm his brethren—and, therefore, our Lord says: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "Behold, I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." In many ways our Lord fulfils this gracious promise, and, conspicuously, in the establishment of His vicar on earth. In him we have our Lord as a ruler, a teacher, and a guide, since it is the wisdom and power of Jesus which upholds him and preserves him from error as the Head of His Church.

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXI.

The Marks of the Church.

"The Queen stood on Thy right hand in golden raiment wrought about with variety" (Ps. xliv. 10).

The Catholic Church is the Spouse of Christ. She is made up, indeed, of sinful men, and, therefore, scandal will necessarily arise amongst her members; and accordingly our Lord says: "It must needs be that scandals come" (St. Matt. xviii. 7). The Church is the field in which the Lord sowed good seed, but "while men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade had sprung up and had brought forth fruit, there appeared also the cockle" (St. Matt. xiii. 25). In spite, however, of all the scandals which have arisen, and will arise, amongst individuals, to the end of time, the Church as a body will always be the Spouse of Christ, which can never fall away, and never be spotted or stained in His sight. There may be shortcomings amongst the rulers of the Church, and rebellion and iniquity amongst her people, but in herself the "gates of hell shall never prevail against her." "Christ also loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life. That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Eph. v. 25).

This, then, my dear brethren, was our Blessed Lord's gracious design in establishing His Church: to make her His Spouse, purchased by His Precious Blood, and richly endowed with His graces, with an essential sanctity which all the weaknesses of her children, and all the assaults of the enemy, should never be able to tarnish; she was to

be the Queen, bearing about amongst men the marks of her divine dignity, the golden garment which becomes her rank as the daughter of the Most High, and the Spouse of His Divine Son.

The Church of God upon earth must always possess certain supernatural characteristics by which she can be known; she has a divine origin, and, therefore, must be unlike all societies which spring from the earth; she is to be the witness to Christ, and, therefore, she must be able to show certain signs and tokens by which her claim to confidence may be known; she is the appointed teacher of men, and must, therefore, always be able to produce the credentials which establish her authority to teach.

The Catechism says: "The Church of Christ has these four marks by which we may know her: she is one, she is holy, she is Catholic, she is apostolic." These four marks are no modern invention, but are contained in the Creed of the First General Council—made when the early ages of persecution and martyrdom were only just concluded. The Nicene Creed expresses its belief in "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church," and its words have been in constant use amongst Christians up to the present day. Even those who are, unfortunately, separated from the Catholic Church, still, as a rule, bear witness, in word at least, that the Church must be One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. It is of these marks that I propose to speak to-day.

Before discussing the marks of the Church, however, there is a consideration which is sometimes forgotten: you must have something to apply them to. The Church must have an existence in some distinct, tangible form before you can begin to consider whether she is One, Holy, Catholic, or Apostolic. If you cannot say precisely what the Church means, and where it is; if it is uncertain what the Church includes or excludes, it is idle to talk of its distinguishing marks. If you mean by the Church a visible, organized society, under a regular government, with well-defined boundaries, which all men can see, we may reasonably talk of the marks by which she is to be known; but if you mean merely a number of individuals

scattered throughout the world, with no bond of union, and no power of acting together, and no centre of authority, who cannot in any way be said to form a society or corporate body, it is useless to discuss the marks which distinguish them as a body.

The first mark of the Church is Unity. She must be One because God is One. Unity is the mark of God throughout His creation; in everything, great and small, we find the evidence of one Almighty hand, and one all-wise mind. In the midst of the immense variety of life which surrounds us, we can everywhere trace one all-powerful law, and a unity and consistency of idea which is only illustrated by the infinite variety of detail with which it is carried out. So it must be in the spiritual order; the Church, which is God's spiritual kingdom, must be marked by the same unity and consistency of design which distinguishes the rest of His creation. The Spouse of Christ must be clothed in the "golden raiment" of unity, "wrought about" with the infinite variety of precious graces which He has bestowed upon her. "One body, and one spirit, as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one Baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all. But to every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the giving of Christ" (Eph. iv. 4).

Here, my dear brethren, we have the picture of the Church of God. Because there is one Lord and Father of all, there must be not only one spirit, but one body of the Church; as there is but one Baptism, so there can be but one faith, whilst, at the same time, there is every variety of grace, "according to the measure of the giving of Christ." This unity includes two things: unity of faith and unity of organization, by which the Church is formed into one body. Faith is the grace by which we accept the teaching of God, and the subject-matter of faith is what God has taught us. Everything that God has taught is part of the faith, which, directly or indirectly, expressly or implicitly, we have to accept: "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have

commanded you." "He, therefore, that shall break one of these least commandments, and shall so teach men, shall be called the least in the kingdom of God" (St. Matt. v. 19). At the same time, nothing that has *not* been taught by God can ever form part of the faith; men may find out many things themselves which, in their own way, are good and true, but these are always essentially distinct from the faith which is revealed by God.

The "faith once delivered to the saints," for which St. Jude tells us we are to "contend earnestly" (v. 3), must, therefore, necessarily be one, since God cannot possibly vary His teaching. What He has once taught as true must necessarily be true for all times, for all people, and under all circumstances, and, therefore, unity of doctrine is a necessary mark of a faith that comes from God, and any system of religion which is not consistent and unchanging in its teaching, is thereby convicted of not being the true religion of our Lord, since "Jesus Christ is yesterday, and to-day, and the same for ever."

Now, this unity of faith is, and is acknowledged to be, the one great distinguishing mark of the Catholic Church. Outside her pale there have been, and are, many societies containing at least portions of Christian truth, and able to boast of many excellencies and virtues amongst their members; but the one thing to which none of them can lay claim is unity of faith, and for an obvious reason: such doctrinal unity is a divine gift, which no natural qualities can ever secure.

And, now, let us see what this unity of faith means more exactly. First, it means that from the beginning of the Church till the end the faith never has varied, and never will vary. From the day of Pentecost until this hour, and so on till the consummation of the world, the faith will always be the same. This does not mean that the faith has always been expressed in the same words, and that no new explanations, or *definitions* of faith, have been given. Such a state of things would be an impossibility where men's minds are perpetually at work, and fresh questions are constantly arising, in the ever busy human understanding. Every question that comes, almost

necessarily involves a fresh explanation, and without such explanation the truth is obscured, and would soon be reduced to unmeaning forms of words. A divinely-appointed teacher like the Catholic Church must go on, therefore, clearing up in each age the difficulties that arise, and making the truth more and more distinct. So it has been from the beginning, and so it will be to the end. The apostles began it themselves in their first Council at Jerusalem. They had to decide what was the relation of the Old Law to the New: whether the obligations which had been of Divine command up till that time were still binding. They began their decree with the words: "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay no further burden upon you" (Acts xv. 28).

The Holy Spirit, who, by their mouths thus began the work of solving difficulties, and clearing up questions of faith and practice, continued with the Church, and by the voice of her pastors, has decided all the great questions which in turn arose—the Divinity of our Lord and the doctrine of the Blessed Trinity—the question of Divine grace and original sin, and all things else which were necessary for preserving the "faith once delivered to the saints" uninjured down to our own day; and the same Holy Spirit will always be with the Church in every difficulty which may hereafter arise.

Unity of faith, then, does not mean one unaltered from words, but one distinct and consistent doctrine never varying, never going back, in which, as it were, line falls upon line, so that the truth becomes more and more vivid, and is made clearer and more manifest to each generation as it comes.

To secure unity of faith, it is not enough constantly and consistently to teach the true faith: it is necessary, also, to reject everything inconsistent with it, since unity of faith is not consistent with tolerating error. People sometimes talk as if tolerating erroneous doctrine was a sign of a "large-hearted" and "liberal" disposition; whereas, it really means nothing but indifference to unity, and purity of faith. If faith is really the revelation—

the Word of our Lord Jesus Christ—how can you possibly suffer anything which is contrary to it? St. Paul writes: "As we said before, so now I say again: If any one preach to you a Gospel besides that which you have received, let him be anathema" (Gal. i. 9).

One of the marks, then, of the Church's unity is the fidelity with which she has denounced error. She is the guardian of Christ's truth, and has never failed to denounce everything contrary to it: her teachers are to feed the flock and to lead them to the true pastures of Christ's word, and she has never failed to warn them of every danger of error. The stern and uncompromising way in which she has condemned every deviation from the truth is very often attributed to her as a fault, whereas it is, in reality, a necessary part of that unity of faith which essentially belongs to her. There is a lesson which we ourselves may learn from this—and that is, that we cannot be really true to our faith without being intolerant of error; we may be as kind and forbearing as possible with those out of the Church, and give them all possible credit for good faith and good intentions, but we must never have any sympathy for false doctrine—if we do, we place our own faith in great peril.

For real unity of faith it is necessary, not only that the Church, as a body, should have one faith, but also that, in some way or other, every individual member of the Church should share in the same faith. How is this to be done, since the minds and education of different people vary so much? How can poor ignorant people, who have no means of instruction, and little children, who have hardly arrived at the use of reason, have the same faith with the learned? It is only in the Catholic Church that this is possible. The "object of faith" is not one or two doctrines, but the whole teaching of the Catholic Church, which has been made known, or will be made known. Every Catholic accepts the Church as a teacher sent by God, whose word may be implicitly relied on, and, therefore, accepts as absolute and certain truth that which she has declared to be part of God's revelation, and, moreover, accepts by anticipation those things that

she may hereafter have to tell us, should it be necessary for her further to explain the Catholic faith. All, therefore, have precisely the same faith by believing in the authority which teaches it: they believe implicitly—that is, they take it on trust, independently of their knowledge of the details, so that the differences of learning and mental capacity do not in any way affect the unity of faith.

When we come, however, to explicit faith—that is, to the faith which considers each article in detail, and accepts it individually, then all the differences of intellect and education come into play, as, obviously, one man will know very much more about the particulars of his faith than another, and have clearer ideas concerning it. It is obvious that little children and uninstructed people can know very little of the faith explicitly, but have to accept on trust a great deal, which they are unable to remember or understand. It is not that they have less faith, or a different faith, from those better instructed, but that they have less capacity for grasping the details of it.

Every Christian ought to know as much about the faith of the Church as is possible, consistently with his position in life and means of knowledge. "The secret and hidden things of Thy wisdom Thou hast made manifest to me" (Ps. l. 8). Almighty God has deigned to reveal Himself to us, and to tell us many wonderful things about His own Divine Nature and attributes, and He has given us a guide, that our feet may not wander through these mysterious ways: the least Christians can do is to learn these truths according to their capacity. We must believe *implicitly* everything the Church teaches; but there are many things which we are also bound to believe with explicit faith—that is, with accurate knowledge; and the wider our knowledge, and the greater our intellectual hold on the mysteries of faith, the better for ourselves.

The unity of faith, however, is only one part of that unity which is the special mark and glory of the Catholic Church; she must also have unity of discipline. One

faith alone is not enough to make one body. The very idea of a body suggests the union of a number of different parts, connected in such a way that they depend one on another; there must be communication between them, and mutual reliance; there must be the head and the members; there must be commanding and obeying, and distinctions of offices and functions. St. Paul very elaborately compares the Church to a living body, and points out that there must be an organization corresponding to that of the natural body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, whereas they are many, yet are one body: so also is Christ. For in one spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one spirit we have all been made to drink. For the body also is not of one member, but of many. If the foot should say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body, is it therefore not of the body? . . . But now God hath set the members, every one of them, in the body, as it hath pleased Him. And if they were all one member, where would be the body?" (1 Cor. xii. 12).

This corporate unity, by which all her members are visibly united together, and are visibly in subjection to one head, is, indeed, the great and special mark of the Church. The unity of faith could not have been preserved amongst men except by unity of discipline and common obedience; and, if the same faith *had* been miraculously maintained without this corporate union, it could never have been a mark of the Church in any great or conspicuous way. It is, and always must be, a difficult matter to trace very accurately the unity of faith—to see how the faith of our own day agrees with the faith of the early ages. It requires some knowledge of the world to ascertain the identity of our faith with that of distant parts of the world; so that unity of faith can never be much of a guide to the simple and unlearned, but all men can see that we are one body in discipline and obedience. That we are united to the Holy See, and pay obedienee to our Holy Father the Pope, is a sign

which no one can fail to see. Every Catholic in the world is directly united to him by the Catholic hierarchy, as the members of the human body are united to the head. Every Bishop must be in communion with the Holy See; each one must be appointed bishop, but with the consent of the Pope, and is in constant communication with him; every bishop rules his own diocese, and on him the pastors of souls depend, and with the pastors the flocks; so that there is the exact mutual dependence and unity of obedience which the comparison of the human body suggests.

The Church is divided by its organization into two parts: those whose office it is to teach, and those who are bound to listen; the teaching Church and the hearing Church. The teaching Church consists of the Pope and the Bishops in communion with Him. The Pope is the universal teacher, and alone possesses the pastoral office in its fulness. The Catechism tells us that "the Pope is the spiritual father of all Christians," and is "the shepherd and teacher of all Christians, because Christ made St. Peter the shepherd of the whole flock when He said to Him, Feed my lambs, feed my sheep. He also prayed that his faith might never fail, and commanded Him to confirm His brethren." The Bishops under him, and in communion with him, are the ordinary teaching authority, each in his own diocese. To them are joined the priests, who have a share of their office, and under them are the ordinary channels by which the teaching of the Church is made known to the people.

Bishops and priests, however, are not necessarily teachers; they have not a right to teach simply because they have received the Sacrament of Holy Orders. Their teaching authority comes simply from this, that they are in communion with the supreme authority, and have a commission, either by direct delegation from the head of the Church, or in virtue of the position which they occupy with his sanction.

And now, what is the hearing Church? We may say that every individual Christian belongs to it: not only the laity, but the clergy and the Bishops and the Pope

himself as a private individual. Those who are the organs of the Church are none the less its members, and bound to "hear the Church." The shepherds are themselves sheep also, and are as much dependent upon the guidance of the Divine Shepherd as the meanest of their flock. It is the office of the pastors, by the light which God gives to them, to make clear what is the teaching of the Church, but when that teaching is plain they are just as much bound to follow it as any one of the laity.

The most solemn way in which the doctrinal decisions of the Church are promulgated is by a General Council—that is, when the Bishops of the whole Church are summoned by the Pope to meet in council, and there to consider the questions which need decision. The apostles themselves, as we read in the Holy Scripture, set the example of this solemn form at the Council of Jerusalem, and it has been followed on all great occasions down to our own time. The decree of a General Council, which has been duly confirmed by the Pope as head of the Church, is infallible, and must be received by all Christians as the voice of God, speaking by His Church. But this most formal and solemn way of deciding can only be used on very great occasions, and the ordinary way in which the Church speaks is by the decree of the Pope, when "as pastor and teacher of all Christians he defines a doctrine concerning faith or morals to be held by the whole Church." Such a decree of the Pope has always been received as the infallible teaching of the Church, and it is now decided that it is infallible of *itself*, and not from any subsequent consent of the Church, and that it possesses the very same infallibility which our Lord granted to the whole Church.

The unity which joins all members of the Church into one visible body is, as I have said, the most conspicuous sign which distinguishes it on earth, and it is the one most insisted upon by the Fathers. There is no doctrine more clearly laid down, from the earliest times, than the absolute necessity of being within the Church's pale, and the greatness of the sin of separating from the union of the Church. I will give you a beautiful passage from a

saint and martyr of the third century—St. Cyprian—on this subject: "As the sun has rays many, yet one light; and the tree boughs many, yet its strength is one, resting on the firmly-clinging root; as when many streams flow down from one fountain-head, though a multiplicity of waters may seem to be diffused from the bountifulness of the overflowing abundance, yet is unity preserved in the common source. Part a ray of the sun from its orb, this division of light the unity allows not; break a branch from a tree, once broken it can bud no more; cut the stream from its source, the remnant dries up. Thus the Church, flooded with the light of the Lord, puts forth her rays through the whole world; yet the light is one, which is spread over every place, while its unity of body is preserved. In the luxuriance of her plenty, she stretches her branches over the universal earth, and spreads out far and wide her beautiful and onward streams. Yet there is one head and one source, and one mother abundant in the results of her fruitfulness. It is of her that we are born; with her milk are we nourished; her breath is our life. The Spouse of Christ cannot become adulterate, she is undefiled and chaste. She owns but one home; with spotless purity she guards the sanctity of one chamber. She keeps us for God; she appoints unto a kingdom the sons that she has borne. Whosoever, being separated from the Church, is joined to an adultress, he is cut off from the promises of the Church. Neither shall he come unto the rewards of Christ who leaves the Church of Christ. He is an alien, he is profane, he is an enemy. He can no longer have God for a Father who has not the Church for a Mother. If any one was able to escape who was without the ark of Noah, then can he escape who is out of doors beyond the Church? The Lord warns and says: He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth. He who breaks the peace and concord of Christ's Church, does so against Christ. He who gathers elsewhere than in the Church, scatters the Church of Christ" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 143).

From these strong and beautiful words, my dear breth-

ren, we can see how great was the importance the fathers attached to the visible unity of the Church, and how great an evil and misery they thought it for any one to be separated from her communion. It must, indeed, always be a very great crime or a very great misfortune; any one who is cut off from the communion of the Church by his own fault is guilty of a great crime, and those who are outside, even when it is by no fault of their own, are very unfortunate. It must always be a great misfortune to be separated from the fold of Christ, and from all the blessings which He gives to the sheep that are within the fold, even to those who are not responsible for their condition.

And now, my dear brethren, what is the lesson we have ourselves to learn? The first thing is to be very jealous of the unity of the Church, and to have a great horror of anything, of any line of conduct, of any perversity or self-will which is calculated to disturb the harmony of God's Church. Every day in the most solemn part of the Mass the priest prays God "to deign to grant peace and unity to His Church according to His will," and the same ought to be the constant prayer of every good Catholic. Our Lord at His Last Supper prayed for His followers "that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me" (St. John xvii. 21). This, then, is the object for which our Lord established and preserved His fold in unity, that we might be one, not only by the possession of one faith, but by unity of heart and charity, so that the world might know that our holy faith was founded by Him.

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXXII.

Sanctity.

"For this is the will of God, your sanctification" (1 Thess. iv. 3).

Our Lord established His Church on earth to make us holy. He had brought with Him into this world a new standard of holiness, and the work He designed for His Church was to spread and to maintain this standard amongst men. He was not contented with such holiness as had been practised even by the saints of the Old Law, but would call His followers to something much higher. In His words to the Jews, our Blessed Lord keeps on drawing a distinction between what had been asked of men in old times, and what He Himself should require. "For I tell you that unless your justice exceed that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. You have heard that it was said to them of old . . . but *I* say to you" (St. Matt. v. 20).

The idea of sanctity which Jesus brought into the world, my dear brethren, was that of perfection; and, to lead men to it, He put before them the highest possible standard of perfection—a standard and example which they would not have dared to take for themselves—nothing else than the infinite perfection of the Most Holy Lord God. "Be ye, therefore, perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (St. Matt. v. 48).

In the first place, our Lord was not content with exterior goodness, but He looked to the heart. If the heart was not pure and right before the Lord, no sort of exterior work, no sacrifice, no excellence of any kind, would avail. "Woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites; because you make clean the outside of the cup, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness . . . because you are like to whited sepulchres, which outwardly ap-

pear to men beautiful, but within are full of dead men's bones and of all filthiness" (St. Matt. xxiii. 25).

Our Lord lays the greatest stress on purity of heart, without which there can be no holiness in His sight. "The things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart, and those things defile a man, for from the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, false testimonies, blasphemies: these are the things that defile a man" (St. Matt. xv. 18). He warns us, therefore, not to be satisfied with avoiding the external manifestation of evil, but to go deeper, and root it out of our hearts. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God."

But perfection was not only to be interior, but complete; we were to "stand perfect and full in all the will of God." We were to have a perfect love of God, and, at the same time, a universal charity for our neighbours. "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said to him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first commandment. And the second is like to this: thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments dependeth the whole law and the prophets." Our Lord came down to extend the great and earnest love of God amongst men—that they might have a greater knowledge of Him and a more burning love than had been given even to the holiest men of earlier ages; that they might be "rooted and founded in charity, and be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth, and length, and height, and depth." He came to "cast fire upon earth"—this fire of the love of God which was to produce such marvellous effects on the hearts of men. He taught them to love God as their Father in heaven; He taught them that it was a privilege to do and suffer anything for the glory of His name; He taught them that "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not up his cross and followeth me is not worthy of me. He

that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for me shall find it."

To this excellent perfection in the love of God, our Lord joined a universal charity to men—a charity which was not to be bounded by country or by religion, but to spread over the whole earth. His disciples were to love their brethren with a charity which was to resemble that of their "Father who is in heaven, who maketh His sun to rise upon the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." And this charity was not to be a mere external charity, but was to be accompanied by interior love and a spirit of forgiveness: "So shall my Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Our Lord was not contented with the love of brethren hitherto practised by men, but demanded a perfection as yet unknown. "You have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (St. Matt. v. 44).

To this exalted standard of perfection in the love of God and man, our Lord added ideas of holiness of which men had never dreamed. He was not contented with putting before them what all must practise, but He gave them *counsels* of perfection to which only a few were to be called as a special favour: "If thou wilt be perfect, go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me." Here our Lord indicates a state of perfection that was quite new to the world—which was to consist, not merely in making a good use of worldly possessions, but in abandoning all things for God.

The work of the Catholic Church on earth was to carry out these exalted ideas of sanctity and perfection. She must first teach these new principles to men, and insist upon them, so that the world, in spite of itself, should be compelled to listen and to adopt them; and, when once they had been taught, it was for the Church to preserve them through ages. She taught them, and taught

them so thoroughly, that the world made them its own, and now thinks that Christian morality is its own idea and invention. Even those outside the Church have for their own, the ideas and principles which she first taught, and have, as it were, entered into her inheritance; but still she has to watch over them, and preserve them from alteration.

There is a perpetual tendency amongst men to come down from the high principles which our Lord taught, and to make the law of God suit the convenience or prejudices of men—to accommodate the Gospel to the spirit of the age, and the Church only can make head against this disposition. It is plain that nothing invented by man, and founded only on men, can resist the mighty force of the human opinion and feeling; and therefore it was that our Lord built His Church upon a rock, that it might be able to stand fast amidst the ever-moving flood.

The Catechism says: "The Church is holy, because she teaches a holy doctrine, offers to all the means of holiness, and is distinguished by the eminent holiness of so many thousands of her children." Let us consider these grounds of holiness. She teaches a holy doctrine in the sense that every word, every point of the faith revealed by God, is sacred, and has been preserved as such. The Catholic Church is now, and has been through all ages, ready to suffer everything and sacrifice everything rather than allow the smallest doctrine of the faith to be tampered with. She has shown a thousand times over that no earthly consideration, neither the fear nor the favour of this world, will ever induce her to compromise in the least matter concerning the faith. "Amen, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass, not one jot or tittle shall not pass of the law till all be fulfilled." "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my word shall not pass" (St. Matt. v. 18—24-35.)

The Catholic Church is the guardian of this holy doctrine, and heaven and earth shall pass away rather than that she should prevaricate one word of what she has received from her Divine Master. The doctrine is holy

in itself, and holy in its influence upon men, and the Catholic Church has gone on, through all ages, enforcing it; in every council, in every assemblage, the same voice is heard, always recalling men to the high standard which our Lord had once taught. No matter how corrupt the age was, and how sinful men had become—no matter that the very Councils themselves were composed of sinful men—the Church has always had the same thing to say: "Be ye holy, because I, the Lord thy God, am holy" (Lev. xix. 2). "Be you, therefore, perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." The very fact that scandals have sometimes arisen, which is often objected to the Church—as if our Lord had not foretold that they would arise—only makes more remarkable the constant and unfailing holiness of the Church's doctrine.

But the Church was appointed by our Lord, not only to maintain unsullied the holy doctrine and high moral standard which He had taught—she was also to provide the means for the personal sanctification of her children. In the nature of things the Church on earth cannot be holy in the sense that all her members are holy: that is the glory reserved for the triumphant Church in heaven. Here the Church must be made up of sinful men, and her work is amongst sinful men, who are to be reclaimed, taught, encouraged, and made perfect, and she must possess the spirit and the means for carrying out this work.

The conversion of sinners is the one great object which engrosses all her thought, so that in her eyes everything else is trivial in comparison. All the great ends of human ambition, of which men think so much, are as nothing in the idea of the Church in comparison with the sanctification of one single soul. She is here to sanctify souls by applying to them the grace of God: her work is to take sinners and to turn them into saints, or, at any rate, to snatch them from destruction, and, for this purpose, she has been abundantly supplied, by her Divine Master, with the power of speaking to their hearts, and providing for their wants.

In the first place, she is always calling sinners to repentance: "Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at

hand." She is like St. John the Baptist, with a word of warning to every human soul. Oh, my dear brethren, how often have we listened to the voice of the Church calling us! for how many years has that solemn warning been repeated to us: "the kingdom of God is at hand:" "your salvation is nearer than when you believed:" "now is the acceptable time!" You cannot say that the Church has failed to call you to repentance.

But it is not mere calling that we want, we need also encouragement. Half our danger is that we are so bowed down by sin and misery that we lose confidence and think that there is no more hope; but, however deeply we have fallen, we may always hear the voice of God's Church: You *can*, you *must* return: God will not "allow you to be tempted above that which you are able." God has provided a remedy for you, and will wash away your sins: "If your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow; and if they be red as crimson, they shall be white as wool" (Isaias i. 18). These are the encouraging words which the Church constantly addresses to us in God's name; but she has not merely words, but actual help to offer. In the sacrament of Penance our Lord has given to His Church the most powerful of all instruments for converting sinners. It is by this that she is able to go out, like the father of the Prodigal Son, to meet sinners: "And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and was moved with compassion, and running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him" (St. Luke xv. 20).

When sinners think of turning to God they are, like the prodigal, "a great way off;" and if they were left to themselves, without any special means of grace, without anything specially provided for their wants, they would faint on the way. Therefore, our Lord has furnished His Church with this most excellent sacrament for the encouragement and support of sinners. But it is not only for great sinners that our Lord has provided His Church. Our Lord has made His Church like a mother, to watch over her children from the cradle to the grave, never forgetting them, always encouraging them, always able to

supply their wants out of the treasures entrusted to her. Our Lord promised His sheep that they should "go in, and should go out, and should find pasture." The Lord ruleth me, and I shall want nothing. He hath set me in a place of pasture, He hath brought me up on the waters of refreshment" (Psalm xxii. 1). Surely, my dear brethren, this must be the most conspicuous mark of the Church of God—that she has pasture fitted for the refreshment of all her children at all times, and she alone can claim to be the mother of the children who can provide for their wants. In the Sacraments the Church can minister to every age in human life, and provides a fitting support in every trial. Hardly are we born into this world, than our spiritual mother provides for us in the sacrament of Baptism, cleanses us in that precious laver, and presents us unspotted to her Divine Spouse. As life goes on, at every emergency that occurs, there is always some sacrament to give us the special help we need. The Church has always something for us—some special way in which the Precious Blood of Christ may be applied to our souls, and so she goes on supporting the weak, reclaiming the erring, and perfecting the elect, and never leaves us till the day when she commends us to God with loving last words: "I commend thee, dear brother, to the Almighty God, and consign thee to the care of Him whose creature thou art, that, when thou shalt have paid the debt of all mankind by death, thou mayest return to thy Maker, who formed thee from the dust of the earth." And even then her care is not over, for she follows us in her prayers before the throne of God, and, day after day, in the Holy Mass, she begs of Almighty God to "grant to all that rest in Christ a place of refreshment, light and peace."

The Church has for her children a daily sacrifice and a daily food. "The Lamb slain from the beginning of the world," is offered each day in a thousand churches, and by this sacrifice is constantly renewed the great Sacrifice of Calvary, "for as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). And, with this

Eucharistic sacrifice, in which our Lord constantly offers Himself for the wants of His people, the Church offers "the sacrifice of praise always to God—that is to say, the fruit of lips confessing to His name" (Heb. xiii. 15). The Psalmist says: "I have gone round, and have offered up in His tabernacle a sacrifice of jubilation: I will sing and speak praise to the Lord." "Seven times a day have I given praise unto Thee" (Ps. xxvi. 6—cxviii. 164). So, throughout the whole world, the "divine office" of praise is daily recited "seven times a day" by every Bishop and priest of the Church, to praise and thank God on behalf of the people, and to beg His grace and mercy for them, and that the Church on earth may join her praises to those of the triumphant Church in heaven.

But the greatest of all the gifts which our Lord offers to us in His Church is the sacramental feast of His own Body and Blood in the Blessed Sacrament. "As the Living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father, so he that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (St. John vi. 58). Our Lord has promised to be the very source of our spiritual life, that we may live by His Divine life: He has promised to become to us "a fountain of water springing up unto life everlasting." He has given Himself to us entirely, so that all His Divine perfections, all His most precious merits, and all His incomparable virtues, may be applied for the salvation of our souls. St. Cyril says of the Holy Eucharist: "Wherefore I counsel thee to betake thee to godly thoughts, and to live carefully and holily, and so to receive that blessing—a blessing which, believe me, doth banish not death only, but all diseases likewise. For when Christ dwelleth in us, He stilleth the law of death in our members, which warreth against the law of our mind. He giveth strength to godliness, He turneth to calm the turbulent surging of our mind, He cureth them that are sick, He raiseth up them that are fallen, and, like the Good Shepherd who giveth His life for the sheep, He prevaileth that the sheep perish not" *(Breviary Lesson)*.

When we think of all these different means of holiness and perfection which our Lord has supplied to us in His

Church, and particularly in the Holy Eucharist, may we not, my dear brethren, say with St. John Chrysostom: "Ah, me! how many a way is open to us whereby we may be saved! He hath made us His, He hath given His Body to us, and we still are not turned away from evil."

But the Church does not provide for the conversion of sinners only, but also for the perfecting of the just. She has, as the apostle says, "strong meat for the perfect, for them who by custom have their senses exercised in the discerning of good and evil" (Heb. v. 14). From the very beginning of the Church down to our own time there have been found thousands upon thousands of souls who have striven and are striving to carry out the very letter of our Lord's counsel: "Go, sell what thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven, and come, follow me" (St. Luke xviii. 22).

The counsels of perfection have their home in the Catholic Church, and bands of men and women who are ever springing up within her to devote their lives to a more perfect following of Christ, are one of her distinguishing attributes. In vain have the powers of the world tried, again and again, to disperse them; in vain has the wisdom of the world derided their simplicity. "These are they whom we had some time in derision, and for a parable of reproach; we fools esteemed their life madness and their end without honour; behold, now they are numbered among the children of God, and their lot is among the saints" (Wisd. v. 3).

They follow the very word and example of our Lord Himself. "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head" (St. Matt. viii. 20). He was the example of poverty in the stable of Bethlehem; He was poor during His life, and consummated His poverty when stripped of all things as He hung upon the cross. To follow Him, the Church has encouraged her children to give up everything by a life of voluntary poverty and privation to follow Him, Crowds of men and women have embraced the virginal state, that they might have a part in that happy band which St. John describes, in a special manner,

as following our Lord in heaven: "And they sung, as it were, a new canticle before the throne, and before the living creatures and ancients, and no man could say the canticle but the hundred and forty-four thousand who were purchased from the earth. These are they who were not defiled with women, for they were virgins. These follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth; these were purchased from among men the first fruits to God and the Lamb" (Apoc. xiv. 3). The one great work of the Church on earth is the perfecting of the elect, and they are to be made perfect by the imitation of their Master. "And we know that to them that love God all things work together unto good to such as, according to this purpose, are called to be saints, for whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made comformable to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 28).

These, my dear brethren, are the "means of holiness" which the Church offers to us. She watches over us all with motherly care during our whole lives, from the cradle to the grave, and provides for every state and condition—for young and old, for the strong and for the weak, to reclaim the sinner, and to perfect the saint. If we do not avail ourselves of all these helps as we ought, at least let us dwell upon them, that we may value the loving kindness of our Lord in providing such efficacious means to lead us on in the way of salvation.

But the Church does not merely provide us with the means of grace; she supplies us also with the grandest possible examples of heroic virtue, to teach us what the grace of God can accomplish, in spite of the weakness of human nature. The Church is holy, because "she is distinguished by the eminent holiness of so many thousands of her children." Our Lord reigns in heaven surrounded by glorious armies of saints. "Thee, the glorious choir of the apostles; Thee, the laudable company of prophets; Thee, the white-robed army of martyrs, doth praise." These are the trophies of the Catholic Church, and the perpetual example to her children on earth. Do we want to know how efficacious are the means of grace,

let us look up to heaven, and see how wonderful God is in His saints. Do we want examples of fortitude to teach us how we are to overcome this world, let us look to the triumphant martyrs of the early Church, St. Stephen and St. Lawrence, and to the long train of men and women after them, even down to our own day, who have resisted unto blood, and deserved the palm branch of victory. Do we want patience to struggle against the daily trials of life, we have before us the grand array of confessors, holy bishops, and priests, men of all ranks and degrees, kings on their thrones, and peasants amid their daily toils, who have "fought the good fight, and finished their course," for whom "a crown of justice has been laid up by the just Judge." Do we want courage to fight against the allurements of the flesh, there is the long train of virgins, "who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth," to encourage us. Do we want examples of enterprize and self-devotion in the cause of God, there are thousands of apostolic missionaries, who sacrificed everything on earth to spread the name of Jesus amongst men.

Numbers of these missionaries showed a courage and spirit of enterprise which the world could not but admire, and carried the cross of Christ into countries where even the soldier's sword did not dare to enter. If you want examples of heroism, look at the picture of St. Francis Xavier dying on the island of Sancian in his vain attempt to enter the great Chinese empire after the wonders which he had accomplished in India; or look at St. Peter Claver spending his life amongst the negro slaves, becoming their servant, and making their conversion the work, and recreation too, of his life. And this apostolic work belongs not to one age or another, but has been continued in constant succession from the days of the apostles to our own time.

They were all men like ourselves, with the same difficulties to encounter, the same faith to encourage them, and the same Sacraments to supply their wants. The grace of God, and the aids of the Catholic Church, were sufficient for them, and will be sufficient for us also, if only we will avail ourselves of them.

But now, my dear brethren, let us come to the practical part of this consideration. "This is the will of God, your sanctification." Our Lord has made His Church holy that we also may be holy, and all His good gifts to his Church will be thrown away, as far as we are concerned, if we do not labour for our own sanctification. It will not do to boast that we are members of the Holy Catholic Church. "I tell you God is able of these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (St. Matt. iii. 9). "And then I will profess unto them I never knew you: Depart from me you that work iniquity" (St. Matt. vii. 23).

To be holy means to be holy in all things. A man is holy when he tries in all things to conform himself to the will of God, and if there is any one point in which he is not at least trying to please God, he is far off from the idea of perfection. "That you may be perfect and entire, and failing in nothing." It is not enough, therefore, to be diligent in prayer and the service of God; you must also carry your religion into all the pursuits of life. A man cannot be a good Christian without at least trying his best to be a good father and a good husband—a good master or a good servant, according to the position in which God has placed him. It is not sufficient to think that your heart is right before God, and keep it unspotted in His sight, if you are not also conscientious in everything you do. All the helps and means of grace which God gives you are intended to help you to glorify Him by doing all the common duties of life in the most perfect manner possible. "So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. v. 16).

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Catholic Sermons

BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXIII.

Catholic and Apostolic.

"Thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side" (Isaias lx. 4).

The distinctive mark of our Lord's mission was that He came as a Saviour to all mankind. He was not like the prophets of old, who were sent to one country and people, but He came to purchase all the nations of the earth with His Precious Blood, to enlighten them all with His faith, and to gather them all into one fold.

He was "the true light which enlighteneth every man that cometh into this world" (St. John i. 9). He was the Good Shepherd, who was to gather together all the sheep who "had gone astray, and every one turned aside into his own way." St. Augustine says: "Men were being held bondsmen to the devil, slaves to evil spirits. But they have been redeemed from that bondage. They had been able to sell themselves, but they were not able to redeem themselves. A Redeemer came and paid the price for them. He shed His Blood, and, at that cost, bought the world. Ye ask what He bought. Look what He paid, and ye shall see what He bought. Christ's Blood was the price. What is His Blood worth? What, but the whole world? What, but all men? They are very unthankful for His redemption, or very proud, who say that it was only precious enough to buy the Africans, or that they themselves are so precious, that it was only shed for them. Let there be an end to such conceit, an end to such vain glory. What He paid, He paid for all" *(Brev. Lesson)*.

Our Lord, then, died for all men, and, accordingly, the first idea of the religion He established on earth was that it should be "Catholic"—that is, universal. The Church

of Christ was not to be, as the Jewish Church had been, the Church of one favoured people; but was to belong to all nations alike, and to be the common mother of all. "The Gentiles are to glorify God for His mercy, as it is written: Therefore will I confess to Thee, O Lord, among the Gentiles, and will sing to Thy Name. And again He saith, Rejoice, ye Gentiles, with His people. And again, Praise the Lord, all ye Gentiles, and magnify Him, all ye people" (Rom. xv. 9). "For there is no distinction of the Jew and the Greek, for the same Lord is over all, rich unto all that call upon Him, for whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. x. 12).

Whilst our Lord was still in the cradle, the universality of His Church was foretold by the coming of the Wise Men from the East. The Jews came first to adore Him. The shepherds, keeping the night watches over their flocks around Bethlehem, were summoned to "go to Bethlehem and see the Word that was come to pass, which the Lord had showed to them;" but then came the Christmas Day of the Gentiles in the Feast of the Epiphany, and the Wise Men were called by the star out of the East, and came to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the East, and are come to adore Him. . . . And entering into the house, they found the Child with Mary His Mother, and, falling down, they adored Him, and, opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh" (St. Luke ii. 2).

Such were the signs that marked the beginning of our Lord's earthly mission, and the end of it corresponded, for "Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top even to the bottom" (St. Matt. xxvii. 51). What could better represent the total abolition of all national distinctions of creed, and the union of all men into one religious family—men of all nations called to enter into the house and family of our Infant Saviour, and the sanctuary of God, so long concealed by a mysterious veil, laid open to the eyes of all men.

And how is this Catholicity carried out in our Lord's

teaching? "Woman, believe me that the hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem adore the Father. You adore that which you know not; we adore that which we know, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true adorers shall adore the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father also seeketh such to adore Him" (St. John iv. 21). "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem," but throughout the whole earth, in one universal Church, which shall not be bounded by any city or nation, "for from the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place there is sacrifice, and there is offered to my name a clean oblation, for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts" (Mal. i. 11).

And now let us see how these general words were carried out in detail in the commission given by our Lord to His apostles: "Going, therefore, teach all nations;" "Go ye into the whole world and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned" (St. Matt. xxviii. 19; St. Mark xvi. 15). No wider or more universal commission could possibly have been given, but still our Lord thought fit to illustrate His meaning by a special miracle. St. Peter, as the Head of the Church, was the one chosen to open her gates to the Gentiles, and in a vision "he saw the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great linen sheet, let down by the four corners from the heaven to the earth, wherein were all manner of four-footed beasts and creeping things of the earth, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Arise, Peter, kill and eat. But Peter said, Far be it from me, for I never did eat anything that is common or unclean. And the voice spoke to him again the second time, That which God hath cleansed, do not thou call common. . . Now, whilst Peter was doubting within himself what the vision that he had seen should mean, behold the men that were sent from Cornelius stood at the gate. . . and the spirit said to him, Behold, three men seek thee; arise, therefore,

and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent thee" (Acts x. 11).

Nothing shall henceforth be "common or unclean." No nation of the earth shall be so barbarous as to be excluded from the pale of the Catholic Church; no human being so poor and degraded that he may not claim that he belongs to the Church, and the Church belongs to him, as much as to the most cultivated of mankind. And so St. Peter was sent by God to admit the Gentile, Cornelius, into the Church, and as he "was yet speaking, the Holy Ghost fell on them that heard the word. And the faithful of the circumcision, who came with Peter, were astonished that the grace of the Holy Ghost was poured out upon the Gentiles also; for they heard them speaking with tongues, and magnifying God. Then Peter answered, Can any man forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts. x. 44).

The Church of God, then, must, of necessity, be Catholic, and the Catechism explains the title in these words: "The Church is Catholic, or Universal, because she subsists in all ages, teaches all nations, and is the one Ark of Salvation for all." Catholic is the title which the Church of God has always borne, and none but those in communion with the Holy See of Rome have ever been able to get possession of the name. I must here quote to you a beautiful passage from St. Augustine, which is very well known, in which he speaks of the title of Catholic: "In the Catholic Church. . . Many other things there are which must justly keep me in her bosom. The agreement of peoples and nations keeps me; an authority, begun with miracles, nourished with hope, increased with charity, strengthened by antiquity, keeps me; the succession of priests from the chair itself of the apostle Peter—unto whom the Lord, after His resurrection, committed His sheep to be fed—down even to the present Bishop, keeps me; finally, the name itself of the Catholic Church keeps me—a name which, in the midst of so many heresies, this Church alone has, not without cause, so held possession of as that, though all heretics

would fain have themselves called Catholics, yet, to the inquiry of any stranger, 'Where is the meeting of the Catholic Church held?' no heretic would dare to point to his own basilica or house" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 81).

You see, my dear brethren, St. Augustine, in the fifth century, identifies the name of Catholic with Rome, just as we do now; and he says that others would like to claim the title, but are unable to make it their own, just as they are doing at the present day. This is not peculiar to St. Augustine and his times: we find another Father, St. Pacian, in the fourth century, saying just the same thing: "Suppose I entered, this very day, into a populous city, and found there Marcionites, Apollinarists, Cataphrygians, Novatians, and others of the same sort, all calling themselves Christians: by what name should I be able to recognize the congregation of my own people, were it not from its being called Catholic? Come, tell me, who bestowed so many names on the other peoples? . . . . Assuredly, that which has stood during so many ages was not borrowed from man. This name "Catholic" sounds not of Marcion, nor of Apelles, nor of Montanus, nor does it take heretics as its authors. . . . And yet, my brother, fret not yourself: Christian is my name, but Catholic my surname. That names me, this describes me: by this I am approved; by that designated" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 299).

And now, my dear brethren, let us see more exactly what we mean by this quality of Catholicity. The Catechism tells us that it means two distinct things, or, rather, that two conditions are required in order that the Church may be truly called Catholic. There are Catholicity in time, and Catholicity in extent. The Church is Catholic in time or duration, because she existed as one body, without any break, from our Lord's day down to the present time. If it could be shown that at any period since the apostles the Catholic Church was not existing, she would not be Catholic: if anyone could say, for instance, that she began to exist in the fourth century, or the tenth, or sixteenth, she would have no claim to be called

Catholic, because there would be a period during which she did not exist. Of every other body you can tell plainly enough when their existence began, but no man can say when the Church first came into existence. A great Protestant writer says of her: "She saw the commencement of all the Governments and ecclesiastical establishments that now exist in the world: and we feel an assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all." There is no break in the long history of the Church for eighteen hundred years, and she alone can claim to fill up the whole duration up to the time when our Lord sent forth His apostles to teach all nations.

But by Catholicity we more commonly mean the Catholicity of extent—that is, that she is not a national Church, or the Church of one people, but the Church of the whole world. By this we do not mean that there are not many nations which are, in fact, wholly or in part, out of her communion: this does not interfere with her Catholic character. On the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Ghost came down on the apostles and signified the Catholicity of the Church by the gift of tongues, the members of the Church were but few, and those few were of one nation only—but still she was Catholic. When we say she is Catholic, we mean that she has a mission to all nations, and capacity and power to receive them all, and to accommodate them all in her communion. She is not dependent upon any worldly authority or form of Government: she belongs to no one nation or state of society more than another, but is equally at home with all. She was born within the limits of the Roman Empire, yet she could suit herself, quite as well, to the barbarians who succeeded them. Monarchies or republics, civilization or barbarism, it is all the same to her, since her mission is to all mankind, in all states of society. She is, in short, the exact opposite of a National Church. A National Church is dependent on the Government of a particular nation, it carries with it everywhere the social and political feeling of the nation, and it rests on its strength; however far it may wander abroad, its home is in one nation, and it is a foreigner everywhere else—with

the nation it lives, and with the nation it dies. The Catholic Church is of all nations and of no nation: she embraces them all, and is dependent on none.

The Church, again, is Catholic, not only because she is spread throughout the world, but because she is able to take in all nations, and yet maintain one faith and a corporate union. Many things are universal, but one only Catholic. Error is universal—wherever you go, you find it; but then it is not one. It takes one form in one place, and another in another. It suits itself to the character of those amongst whom it is found, and flourishes everywhere at the expense of consistency. Heresies are numerous, and are found in all parts of the world, and there is nothing wonderful in it, because they have no corporate union; but the Church is one, and she is marked out from all other communities as the only society on earth which can exist independent of all national and political power, embrace the world with one organization, and call her children out of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, to accept one faith and to obey one Head. "For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and a mist the people, but the Lord shall rise upon thee, and His glory shall be seen upon thee, and the Gentiles shall walk in thy light, and kings in the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thy eyes round about thee and see: all these are gathered together, and are come to thee: thy sons shall come from afar, and thy daughters shall rise up at thy side. Then shalt thou see and abound, and thy heart shall wonder and be enlarged, when the multitude of the sea shall be converted to thee, the strength of the Gentiles shall come to thee" (Isaias lx. 2).

These words beautifully represent the Church of God, of which we, my dear brethren, have the privilege of being members. She is spread through every land, and every nation has its part in her; her Sacraments and Sacrifice are to be found in every region of the earth, and the voice of her chief pastor is heard throughout the whole world. "There is no race of men," says St. Justin, "whether of barbarians, or of Greeks, or, in fine, bearing

any other name, whether because they live in waggons, or are without a fixed habitation, or dwell in tents, leading a pastoral life, among whom prayers and eucharists are not offered to the Father and Maker of the universe through the name of the crucified Jesus" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. i. p. 282). This was so in the second century, and how much wider is the Church now?—to how many more nations has she communicated the light of the faith?

And something is to be learned, my dear brethren, from the Catholicity of the Church. In the words of the prophet, our hearts are "to wonder, and be enlarged." We are all a little too apt to shut ourselves in our own particular concerns, and to think too little of what is going on in the great society to which we belong. In every part of her vast domain the Church has trials to bear and exertions to make; truly is she the Church militant, ever fighting—in one place suffering, in another victorious—but ever carrying on that warfare for which she was sent into the world. And ought not we to sympathize in all that is done? Is not one member of the body to feel for the others? If we would be in sympathy with the Catholic Church, and deserve the name of Catholic, we should learn to interest ourselves, not only in the good of religion around us, but in its progress throughout the whole world.

The "Society for the Propagation of the Faith" is, therefore, an institution in which all good Catholics ought to take a great interest; and yet it must be said, with shame, it is very little thought of, and very badly supported amongst us. This society is the great support of the Catholic missions all over the world; wherever work is being done, its aid is given. Hundreds of toiling priests who are fighting the battles of the cross in far countries—aye, and carrying the cross themselves in hunger and thirst and cold—are mainly supported in their arduous work by the funds of the Propagation; and these funds are not the magnificent donations of the rich, but, generally speaking, the small offerings of the Catholic poor, raised chiefly by weekly contributions of one half-

penny! This society, more than anything else, gives us the means of knowing what is going on in the Church—of taking to heart her Catholicity, seeing how she does her work in uncivilized countries, and accommodates herself to all races of men. The "Annals of the Propagation," which are published every few months, tell us what is doing in China and Japan, America and Australia, from the burning deserts of Africa to the Arctic zone; everywhere they tell us of the victories of the Catholic Church, as well as the sufferings and zeal of her ministers. And yet how few of us take much interest? We in England know very little about it all, and are chiefly taken up with our own affairs; we contribute very little, and, indeed, in many cases are not ashamed to take a great deal more than we give. Does not this look as if we wanted to hear a little more about the Catholicity of the Church, and to be reminded that Catholic is not a mere name, but a glorious title which involves sympathy and union with brethren over all the earth?

I must now say something about the last of the great "notes" of the Church: she is apostolic. This title and quality almost necessarily, and of its own idea, goes with the title of Catholic. Nothing is Catholic which is not apostolical, since to the apostles alone our Lord said: "Go and teach *all* nations." They are the root, and on them all the branches must depend; nothing can affect all the branches, or be found in all the branches, which does not proceed from the root. How is it possible for any doctrine which does not spring from the apostles, to be found throughout the Church? Take, for example, the Real Presence of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist, or of the forgiveness of sins in Penance, and ask: Is it possible that these doctrines should have been found in every part of the Catholic Church and yet not be the doctrine of the apostles? Could they, by any possibility, have been introduced at any later period? We may well, then, lay down as a general rule that what is Catholic is also apostolic.

The Catechism says: "The Church is apostolic, because she holds the doctrines and traditions of the apostles, and because, through the unbroken succession

of the pastors, she derives her Orders and her mission from them." There are, then, three things that come from the apostles—doctrine, order, and mission.

There can be no new doctrine: everything which we are called upon to believe must come down to us from the apostles and have its authority from them. We are, as St. Paul tells us, "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone, in whom all the building framed together, groweth up into a holy temple in the Lord" (Eph. ii. 20). To have our Lord as the "corner-stone," we must be built up upon the foundation of the apostles. St. Jerome says: "Whosoever thou art that art a broacher of new dogmas, I beseech thee, spare the ears of the Romans: spare that faith that was commended by an apostle's voice. Why, at the expiration of four hundred years, attempt to teach us what we before knew not? Why bring forward what Peter and Paul would not make known? Until this day the Christian world was without this doctrine. . . . I will lay before you a brief and plain sentiment of my mind; we are to abide in that Church, which, being founded by the apostles, endured unto this day. Whenever you hear those who are said to be Christ's, named, not after the Lord Jesus, but after someone else—as, for example, Marcionites, Valentinians, men of the mountain, or of the plain—know that it is not Christ's Church, but the synagogue of anti-Christ. From this very fact that they were instituted at a later period, they evince themselves to be those whom the apostle foretold were to be. Nor let them feel satisfied with themselves if they affirm what they say from portions of the Scriptures, since even the devil spoke some things out of the Scriptures; and the Scriptures do not consist in being read, but in being understood" *(Faith of Catholics,* vol. i. p. 281).

This is a long passage, but a very important one, since it shows that in the fourth century, as well as in the nineteenth, the one test of the truth of doctrine was its apostolic origin.

By doctrine, we do not mean merely dry forms of

words, definitions, texts, and so forth, but we mean all that practical teaching which gives life and meaning to dogma. Generally speaking, forms of words will not by themselves bring home to men the real spirit of any doctrine; we learn its meaning, to a large extent, from custom, from the ordinary language of the faithful concerning it, and the place it takes in the habits of daily life. We see how our fathers received a doctrine and acted upon it; it was not to them a dead form of words, but made part of their lives, and the effect it had on them is our teaching. If we had never known how the Church had acted with regard to the Blessed Eucharist, what had been her practical directions and daily customs, and the thoughts and feelings of her children about it, we should have had very little notion of the doctrine; it would have been rather a dead form of words than a living reality.

It is precisely this sort of teaching that comes down to us from the apostles: "Hold the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me in faith and in the love which is in Christ Jesus. Keep the good thing committed to thy trust by the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us" (2 Tim. i. 13). This was what the Church received from the apostles: the form of sound words, and the practical lesson of how these mere words were to become living truths.

By apostolic doctrine and practice, we mean not merely doctrine *like* that of the apostles, but doctrine directly *coming* from the apostles—doctrine which descends straight and without break from their teaching. It is easy for people to imagine that they are teaching something that resembles the doctrine of the apostles, or that they are restoring apostolic usage, and coming back to primitive ways; but that is, at the best, only imitation of the apostles, and not descent from them. If the direct descent is once broken, and a doctrine or practice has to be re-introduced, it can no longer claim the authority of the apostles, but is now a new thing, which must look to its authors for whatever credit it can obtain.

The doctrine of the Church is apostolic, because she

first received it from the apostles—it is the "faith once delivered to the saints"—and also because it has been, through all ages, watched over by apostolic authority. It is not enough to say that it had its origin in the teaching of the apostles; there must be some continuance of the apostolic power, and it is the permanent presence of the apostles in the See of St. Peter which gives us a security for the apostolic character of the teaching of the Church.

But we derive not only doctrine from the apostles, but also order and mission. Order signifies the powers of the priesthood which our Lord gave to the apostles. Jesus chose out the twelve and gave to them certain distinct spiritual and supernatural powers, which were to be transmitted by them to their successors. The apostles were the sole channel of these powers, and no one can now possess them who has not received them in direct line from the apostles. If the communication of power from the apostles is interrupted, the powers of the priesthood must necessarily cease. It is like the electric current, which stops at once the moment the connecting wire is broken.

The power of order is the special treasure which our Lord chose to give to His Church: He alone could give it, and He alone is able to preserve it. He gave it, and He watches over it by His peculiar providence, that it may never be lost—that the communication may never be broken, and the visible sign of this watchfulness is the constant and visible succession of Pontiffs in the chair of Peter. This is the great chain which unites the Church of the nineteenth century to that of the apostles, and gives to each individual in communion with the Holy See a security that he is sharing in the graces given by apostolical succession.

[In these Sermons I have tried to avoid controversy, which, perhaps, makes them appear rather vague. I have treated the subject of the authority and marks of the Church at greater length and more accurately in the "Credentials of the Catholic Church" (Washbourne, Paternoster Row).]

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Catholic Sermons

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SERMON LXXXIV.

The Church's Law.

"Thou hast commanded Thy commandments to be kept most diligently" (Ps. cxviii. 4).

The Commandments of God, my dear brethren, do not concern great things only; they are not merely general directions and broad principles, but they come down to the details of everyday life, so as to be our daily guide. So that as the Psalmist says: "Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths" (Ps. cxviii. 105). In the Old Law Almighty God instructed men Himself as to the manner in which all their duties were to be performed, and explained to them, in the most minute way, how they were to serve Him. In the New Law, however, He has left it, in a great measure, to the Church to give practical directions, and to order the details of His service. We can easily understand the reason of this difference. The Jewish dispensation was for one single people, and the ordinances given to them were mainly intended to keep alive the ancient traditions and expectations till Christ should come; and, therefore, it was desirable that the customs and religious practices of the nation should be fixed as immoveably as possible. The Church, on the contrary, was to suit its laws to many different races of men, and to many changing circumstances; and, therefore, although the principles and doctrines were unchangeable, the ways of carrying out those principles were left as elastic as possible, that they might be changed to suit the necessities of mankind.

I propose now to give an explanation of the principal "Commandments of the Church." The first question is of the authority of the Church. On this the Catechism says: "We are bound to obey the Church, because

Christ has said to the pastors of the Church, He that heareth you heareth me, and He that despiseth you despiseth me." Our Lord sent His apostles to teach men, but mere teaching power would have had little effect, and would have been quite insufficient to maintain unity amongst men without authority to command. Christ, therefore, gave them full power to command, and imposed on their hearers the strictest duty of obedience. "As the Father hath sent me, I send you." "All power is given to me in heaven and upon earth."

The apostles, therefore, insisted on their right to command; and the duty of obedience is an essential part of the duty of men, as members of the Church. Our Lord Himself says: "If he will not hear the Church, let him be to you as the heathen and the publican" (St. Matt. xviii. 17). And when the Church had actually begun its work amongst men, almost its first collective act was to assert its right to lay commands on the faithful. "For it hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us to lay no further burdens upon you than these necessary things, that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication, from which things keeping yourselves, you shall do well" (Acts xv. 28).

Some of the "necessary things" were, as we well know, only necessary for a time on account of the existing circumstances, and are, therefore, a good illustration of the nature of the Church's commands. St. Paul urges his disciples, St. Timothy and St. Titus, whom he had appointed to be bishops, to be firm in insisting on obedience: "These things command and teach. Let no man despise thy youth" (1 Tim. iv. 12). "These things speak and exhort, and rebuke with all authority. Let no man despise thee" (Tit. ii. 15). Again, St. Paul speaks very strongly to the pastors of the Church at Miletus about the authority committed to them; they were to *rule* the Church of God. "Take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath placed you bishops, to rule the Church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood" (Acts xx.

28). St. Paul himself, moreover, plainly shows that the power exercised is not one merely of exhortation, but one to be enforced by stern decrees. See his way of dealing with a great and public sinner: "I, indeed, absent in body, but present in spirit, have already judged, as though I were present, him that hath so done. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, you being gathered together, and my spirit, with the power of our Lord Jesus, to deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. v. 3).

There are, then, two sets of Commandments, the "Commandments of God" and the "Precepts of the Church," and we must now consider the distinctions between them. First, as regards their authority, they rest on precisely the same ground. It would appear at first sight that the Precepts of the Church must have much less authority than the commands of God, but in reality they are *all* the commands of God, and the only distinction between the two classes of laws is, first, the channel by which they are made known to us, and, secondly, the subject matter on which they treat.

Every Precept of the Church is in reality a command of God; it is a command given in the name of God, and for the service of God, and by an authority which God has appointed. The only motive which men have for observing the Precepts of the Church is obedience to God, and the sin they commit if they disregard them is disobedience to God. When Ananias came to St. Peter with his false pretences, Peter said to him: "Thou hast not lied to men, but to God" (Acts v. 4). And so, if you disobey the laws of the Church, you are disobedient "not to men, but to God."

This is true, to a certain extent, of other human laws —of obedience to the commands of parents, and to the laws of the State, and, accordingly, St. Paul says: "Let every soul be subject to the higher powers: he that resisteth the power resisteth the ordinance of God" (Rom. xiii. 1). But other laws are intended not only for the service of God, and obedience to them does rest *only* on

obedience to God, so that no human law can be taken as God's command in the direct way in which the Church's law is. The law of the Church, therefore, is a Divine law—that is, a law expressly sanctioned by God, and made exclusively for His service, which is made known to us by the will of human superiors appointed by God. There are, however, some important distinctions between this kind of law and that given directly by Almighty God. In the first place, the law of the Church may change; it is sometimes objected that her rules vary at different times, and in different countries, or, again, that dispensations are frequently granted. How can a thing that is wrong be made right, simply by a decree of the Pope? This is a question often asked, but the answer is perfectly plain. The things in which the Church dispenses are not things wrong in *themselves*, but are only wrong because they are forbidden by authority. The decree of the Church cannot make a thing that is wrong in itself, right by dispensation, but it *can* make a forbidden thing lawful by withdrawing the prohibition. The power which makes a regulation can always remove or change it when it thinks fit to do so; an Act of Parliament may make it lawful to do a thing which has been forbidden by Act of Parliament, and a parent may allow a child to do a thing which was strictly forbidden before; in all such cases the withdrawal of the prohibition, in one sense, "makes wrong right," but everyone sees the reasonableness of it. It is exactly on the same principle that all ecclesiastical dispensations are given.

It is inherent in the kind of law that it should admit of change, because, as I have said, the power that makes the law must always be able to change it. A law made by men which men could not change would be an intolerable hardship, and it has pleased God to leave the power of making laws with His Church, because it was for the advantage of men to be ruled, not by a hard and fast law, which could never vary or be relaxed, but by one able to adapt itself to the changing circumstances of society.

A law of the Church can *never* be violated without sin, but it is often possible to obtain relaxations of the

law from the ecclesiastical authority that made it, and, moreover, circumstances may easily arise which *exempt* us from its observance. This comes from the nature of the things the law affects. The Commandments of God are generally about great principles, which are always true, and which remain unchanged in all cases; but the Precepts of the Church concern positive duties the performance of which must depend upon circumstances. Sometimes it is impossible to observe them, sometimes great evil or inconvenience would be occasioned by their observance. The Church makes its laws for our good, and, therefore, does not intend them to be applied in cases where they might occasion serious inconvenience. Let us take an example of the distinction between these two kinds of law. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart;" this is a law of God, and from the nature of it no exemption is ever possible. Nothing can ever make it lawful for us *not* to love the Lord our God. To fast and abstain on certain days is a law of the Church, and we see, in a moment, that circumstances may easily arise which will make it impossible to observe it, or, at least, make the observance of it so difficult and injurious that the law would do much more harm than good.

We are, generally speaking, excused from the Commandments of the Church whenever any serious injury or loss would be caused by keeping them, whereas this very seldom or never happens in the direct laws of God; but this is not because they rest on a different authority, but because they concern duties of a different sort.

On the other hand, the laws of the Church are a special test of obedience and loyalty to God; they are so easily fulfilled, and the temptation to break them is, generally speaking, so small and pitiful, that neglect of them seems to involve a special degree of disloyalty and contempt. When we see people breaking the command of God for the sake of eating and drinking, or to avoid a few minutes' trouble, may we not apply to them the word of the Lord in the Prophet Ezechiel: "They have violated me among my people for a handful of barley and a piece of bread" (Ezech. xiii. 10).

There is, moreover, very great spiritual advantage in observing these Commandments faithfully: "in keeping them there is a great reward" (Ps. xviii. 12). They are, as I have said, the best possible means of obedience. Nothing shows the spirit of obedience and keeps the heart of man subject to God so effectually as acts of obedience which are easy in themselves and frequently recurring. The Psalmist says: "Be thou, O my soul, subject to God, for from Him is my patience, for He is my God" (Ps. lxi. 6). There is no doubt that the great temptation of man is to forget the subjection to God in which he ought to live, and the Church's laws are specially valuable because they constantly remind us of it. Again, they often concern comparatively small things, or things which seem to be small, but these small things are ordained as means to lead us to God, and we cannot doubt that when embraced in the spirit of obedience they will have a greater effect in leading us to God than anything we could do for ourselves, and bring with them a greater blessing.

There is, moreover, nothing by which good or bad example is more easily given than by diligence or negligence in the observance of the Commandments of the Church. A Catholic who does not observe them, who, either through carelessness or a disobedient spirit, is seen to disobey these precepts, is a perpetual scandal, and, we may almost say, scatters death around him. His laxity makes others lax, and he teaches the Church's children to disobey her, and makes her enemies despise her. If such a man has a good position, and a good Catholic name, he may do more harm than a dozen professed enemies. On the other hand, if a man is diligent in observing the Commandments; if he will submit to the trifling self-denial they involve, and, still more, is not afraid of the opinions of men, and can stand being laughed at without flinching, he may do incalculable good—and that, too, amongst people whom nothing else will affect. Good example, of this kind particularly, will penetrate where no sermon will reach.

The Catechism explains to us six of the Command-

ments of the Church—those Commandments, that is, which it is necessary for everyone to understand. "The first Commandment of the Church is to keep Sundays and Holydays of Obligation holy, by hearing Mass and resting from servile work." Sundays and Holydays of Obligation are classed together, and the duty of keeping the days holy is the same in both cases. Some people will be inclined to say these holydays are merely instituted by the Church, whereas the Sunday is the direct appointment of God, so you cannot class them together. It is not so, however. The command in the Decalogue, "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath day," plainly does not apply to Sunday, because the Sunday is the first day of the week, whereas the Sabbath is the seventh. It is clear that this is not an accident or a miscalculation, but a deliberate change made by the Christian Church. From this we see that the Church of the apostolic times kept the *principle* of the Fourth Commandment by giving one day in seven to the service of God, but considered the law appointing one particular day to be at an end, and therefore chose a new day of sanctification for the Christian people.

Exactly the same sort of substitution has been made with regard to the Holydays. Almighty God commanded His people to observe a number of festival days besides the Sabbath day, and they were to be kept with the same strictness as that day; these were to be the memorials of His wonderful works, and constantly to remind His people of the favours He had bestowed on them. They had to celebrate every year with great solemnity the feast of the Passover, the feast of Tabernacles, the feast of weeks, and other feasts, each of which was to commemorate some special mercy of God. But the Jewish dispensation, and all its ordinances, were only a preparation for what was to come, and "all these things happened to them in figure, and they were written for our correction, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Cor. x. 11). The great events the Jews commemorated were themselves but passing figures of the Christian mysteries, and naturally the feasts kept in remembrance

of them would be changed into memorials of Christian festivals.

Then, just as the Sabbath, the memorial of the world's creation, passed into the Christian Sunday, the memorial of the redemption of mankind, so did the commemoration of the deliverance of the Jews from Egypt and God's other mercies to them pass into the feasts which celebrate the life and death of our Lord. The change was made on the same grounds and by the same authority, and therefore the obligation, in both cases, rests on the same foundation.

We are bound, then, to keep holy the Holydays of Obligation appointed by the Church with the same exactness with which we observe Sundays—that is, by hearing Mass and resting from servile work; but in practice there is a good deal of difference, in this country at least. The great bulk of people cannot, as a rule, observe Holydays very exactly; labourers and workmen and professional men must go on with their ordinary duties, and cannot abstain from servile work, and there is a very large proportion who are not able even to hear Mass. The work of the world and of every-day life is going on around them, and they are obliged to take their part, and are generally excused, by necessity, from the observance of the Church's law. On Sundays it is different: the people, generally speaking, can observe the day if they will, and it is only in exceptional cases that there is a sufficient excuse for going on with ordinary occupations; whereas, on Holydays occurring during the week, it is rather the exception when men are able to observe the law strictly.

I have said so much, my dear brethren, in order that you may not be uneasy when your duty in life obliges you to neglect the ways of sanctifying Holydays of Obligation commanded by the Church; but I would speak very strongly on the importance of observing them in some way, and of doing something to sanctify them. There are, I am afraid, a great many people who could hear Mass on Holydays if they were really anxious to do so, but who too easily take for granted that they are ex-

cused. In some places there is a very early Mass, and numbers of working men assist at Mass before going to their work. Do you not think they must get a great blessing from God? They are willing to take a little extra trouble to pay honour to His festivals, and we cannot think He will leave them unrewarded. It is very important, at any rate, to observe these days in some way, and not to allow the great feasts of the Church to pass unnoticed, because you cannot do exactly what is commanded. How can you really be a follower of Christ if you have no devotion to the great and touching mysteries of His life?—how can you be a good member of the Catholic Church, if you have no sympathy whatever with the feelings which animate her? The Church's Liturgy is one loving commemoration of her Divine Spouse, Jesus Christ, and, if we would at all enter into her spirit, we must at least try to have a devotion to the principal feasts as they come. You can always do something by way of sanctifying the day; if you cannot hear Mass, can you not go to Benediction in the evening?—or, if even that is beyond your power, can you not make some special commemoration of the feast on the Sunday following? Can you not, at least, say some extra prayers in honour of the feast, or, perhaps, make it the occasion of an additional Communion? If you do none of these things, but allow such feasts as Christmas, or our Lord's Ascension, or Corpus Christi, to pass without any sort of devotion, you must be very much out of sympathy with our Lord and His Church.

Our Lord complained of the want of sympathy shown by the men of His generation, and many of us would fall under His condemnation. "And the Lord said, Whereunto shall I liken the men of this generation, and to what are they like? They are like to children sitting in the market-place, and speaking one to another, and saying, We have piped to you, and you have not danced; we have mourned, and you have not wept" (St. Luke vii. 31). It is most desirable, therefore, even independently of the express command of the Church, to arouse ourselves to special devotion on Holydays, and to do our

best to enter into the spirit of each great festival as it comes.

The number of feasts observed as Holydays of Obligation varies in different places. In some countries many days are kept as Holydays which are working days in England, and, on the other hand, in some places a good many of the feasts which we observe are transferred to the Sundays following.

We have eight days of obligation, of which five are feasts of our Blessed Lord, one is of the Blessed Virgin, one of the apostles, and one of all the saints together. The feasts of our Lord are first the three great festivals with which we celebrate His Nativity: Christmas Day, the Circumcision, and the Epiphany. Christmas Day is the most touching festival in the year, on which each one of us is invited, as it were, to visit our Infant Saviour on the night of His birth. "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." The Lord has condescended to come down to His people, and to pass over that infinite distance which divides Him from His creatures. He condescends to appeal to their tenderness and compassion by appearing before them in the guise of a helpless infant in the poor stable of Bethlehem. "God having spoken on divers occasions, and many ways, in times past, to the Fathers by the prophets, last of all, in these days hath spoken to us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the world" (Heb. i. 1). In this feast our Lord seems no longer to speak by the mouths of His ministers, but has a word to the heart of each individual. He would remind us by the very force of contrast of His eternity, that He was "born of the Father before all ages," and that He is now a new-born Infant before our eyes, that He may be born anew into the hearts of all men. In memory of this three-fold birth of Christ, the Church on that day celebrates three Masses—at midnight, at dawn, and at mid-day.

But it is not enough to celebrate the actual birth of our Lord. He came into the world to redeem us by His Precious Blood, and that redemption must be fore-

shadowed even from His birth. In the next feast—the Circumcision, the octave day of Christmas—our Lord takes the name of Jesus, and does so on the occasion of the first shedding of His Blood. On this day our Lord seems to be born to suffering, born to take up the cross to be our Saviour; and, as it falls on the first day of the year, is a special dedication of the new year to the Holy Name, reminding us "that whatsoever we do in word or work, we must do all in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him" (Colos. iii. 17). And now comes the concluding festival of Christmas, the Epiphany, or, as it is sometimes called, the "Christmas Day of the Gentiles." On this day we celebrate the coming of the Wise Men from the East, who came to adore Him, and we are called upon to join with them in offering Him our solemn homage. The Wise Men opened their treasures, and "offered to Him gifts: gold, frankincense, and myrrh," thereby recognizing in Him the three-fold character of God, King, and Saviour, in which we are to accept Him. The "Epiphany" means the "manifestation" of our Lord, because His royal dignity was, on this day, made known to all men; and on the same feast the Church celebrates the three miracles by which specially He made His divinity known to men—the star which came from the East, the voice of the Holy Spirit at His Baptism in the Jordan, and His first miracle at Cana, in Galilee.

Besides these three Holydays, by which we celebrate our Lord's birth, there are the Ascension and Corpus Christi. These two are "movable feasts"—that is, they do not always fall on the same day of the month. They always come on the same day of the week, Thursday, but the date varies with that of Easter Sunday, on which movable feasts generally depend. Ascension Day is the glorious day of our Lord's triumphant Ascension into heaven, when, "Ascending on high, He led captivity captive: He gave gifts to men" (Eph. iv. 8). This comes on the fortieth day after Easter Sunday. It is a day of glorious memories, pointing out to us the road we have to go, and the country which we are to reach: our Lord

seems to say to us, as we think of His Ascension: "Whither I go, you know, and the way you know" (St. John xiv. 4). "Corpus Christi" is the great feast of the Blessed Sacrament. Our Lord instituted the Holy Eucharist on Maundy Thursday; but on that day the Passion fills our thoughts so that we cannot honour as we should "the Body of the Lord;" and therefore the Church has appointed the Thursday after Trinity Sunday as a holiday in honour of Jesus in the Holy Sacrament. It is a grand feast; everywhere our Lord is borne in procession amongst His people, that He may carry with Him His blessings, as He did through the fields of Palestine when "virtue went out from Him, and healed all."

The one feast of our Lady which is observed as a Holyday is the Assumption, on the 15th of August. All the glories and privileges of her life seem concentrated in this one feast, when, as the Church says: "Mary is taken up into heaven, the angels rejoice and bless God." It is the day of our Lady's happy death, when she "entered into the joy of her Lord": when she saw her Son face to face in His kingdom, never more to be separated from Him. The day of the Apostles SS. Peter and Paul, the 29th of June, is also a Holyday of Obligation. In these two great apostles we commemorate the apostolic college, and the faith and means of grace which God bestowed by them on the whole world: "their sound went over all the earth, and their words even unto the ends of the whole world" (Rom. x. 18).

One more festival remains, and it is a most touching one—it is the feast of "All Saints"—on the 1st of November. On it we celebrate the whole Church of Christ, and, in particular, that glorious army of saints which stand around His throne "clothed in white garments, with palm branches in their hands," who, in the torrent of their happiness, cry out, without ceasing: "Salvation to our God, who sitteth on the throne, and to the Lamb."

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXV.

All Saints.

"After this I saw a great multitude, that no man could number, of all nations, and tribes, and peoples, and tongues, standing before the throne" (Apoc. vii. 9).

We have now come, my dear brethren, to a very beautiful and touching feast—All Saints' Day. This feast puts before us the whole Catholic Church, in all its parts, united together in the Communion of Saints. The Church militant in every region of this earth is raising its heart and voice to that kingdom where God reigns with His saints; and the faithful on earth, if we may say so, join hands with their blessed brethren in heaven. We magnify and praise God for the glory He has given to His saints, and try to unite our voices to their song of praise, whilst they pray to God for us; and, no sooner has the first song of praise in honour of the triumphant Church ceased, than we turn to our other brethren of the Church suffering, and with one accord we pray our Heavenly Father to bring them speedily to their eternal home. "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them." The three parts of God's Universal Church are here most vividly represented, and are united together by that bond in which "communion" consists—the bond of sympathy and love, and union in prayer before the throne of God, as members of one body in Jesus Christ.

"By the Communion of Saints," the Catechism tells us, "we mean that all members of the Church, in heaven, on earth, and in purgatory, are in communion with each other, as being one body in Jesus Christ," and that "the faithful on earth are in communion with each other by professing the same faith, obeying the same authority, and assisting each other with their prayers and

good works." "We are in communion with the saints in heaven, by honouring them as the glorified members of the Church, and also by our praying to them, and by their praying for us." "We are in communion with the souls in purgatory, by helping them with our prayers and good works. It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins" (2 Macc. xii. 46).

These answers explain to us exactly what we mean by those words which we so often repeat: "The Communion of Saints," and the object of the feast we now celebrate, is to put this communion so vividly before us, that it may not be mere words, but a living and consoling truth. "Oh, how glorious is the kingdom in which the saints rejoice with Christ, and, clad in white robes, follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth!" These are the words which are constantly in the Church's mouth during this feast, and truly the kingdom of heaven seems to lie open before us. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard" its beauties, and yet the Holy Scripture is full of passages which seem to bring its glories for a moment before our eyes. "I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated, and His train filled the temple: upon it stood the seraphim. . . . And they cried one to another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts: all the earth is full of His glory. And the lintels of the doors were moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke." "And the Ancient of days sat: His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head like clean wool: His throne like flames of fire, and the wheels of it like burning fire. A swift stream of fire issued forth from before Him: thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him." "And behold there was a throne set in heaven, and One sitting upon the throne. And He that sat was to the sight like the jasper and the sardine-stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four-and-twenty ancients sitting, clothed in white garments, and golden crowns on their heads. And the four

living creatures had each of them six wings, and, round about and within, they are full of eyes, and they rested not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, and who was, and who is, and who is to come. And when these living creatures gave glory, and honour, and benediction to Him that sitteth on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, the four-and-twenty ancients fell down before Him that sitteth upon the throne, and adored Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, "Thou art worthy, O Lord our God, to receive glory, and honour, and power, because Thou hast created all things : and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Isaias vi. 1; Dan. vii. 9; Apoc. iv. 2).

Such, my dear brethren, is the throne of God, as represented to us in the Holy Scriptures—the throne of God, which no mortal eye can ever see—the throne of God, from which proceeds everything that creatures possess, even their very being, and in presence of which all creatures are "as if they had no being at all," and are counted to Him as nothing, and vanity" (Isaias xl. 17). Of His fulness they all have received, and their brightest glory is but the faint shadow of His infinite perfection. "And His train filled the temple:" who can imagine to himself the countless legions of angels that surround the throne of God! "Thousands of thousands ministered to Him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before Him." Angels and archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominations, each reflecting the glory of his Creator, and differing from one another "as star differeth from star in glory," for "there is one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars" (1 Cor. xv. 41).

But we have specially to consider, on this day, the glory of the saints—that is, of those who were once our own brethren on earth, who were of our own race, who had to fight the battle we must all fight, and who have won the crown for which we are now striving. And let us first think of the glory of our Blessed Mother Mary: as Mother of God she is exalted above created

things, and is Queen of angels and of saints. St. John Chrysostom says: "A great wonder, indeed, was Blessed Mary ever Virgin. What has ever been, or ever can be, greater and more illustrious than she? in her grandeur she has surpassed heaven and earth. What more holy than she? Not the prophets, not the apostles, not the martyrs, not the patriarchs: neither angels nor thrones nor dominations, neither cherubim nor seraphim; nor is there to be found amongst created things, visible or invisible, anything greater or more excellent than she. She is the handmaid of God, and, at the same time, His Mother: she is both Virgin and Mother. She is the Mother of Him who was born of the Father before the beginning of all things, whom angels and men acknowledge as Lord of all. Wouldst thou know how greatly this Virgin is exalted above the heavenly powers? They stand before Him with fear and trembling, veiling their faces: she offers the human race to Him whom she brought forth" *(Breviary Lesson)*.

Around the Mother of Jesus are gathered representatives of the human race which He redeemed. Here is the glorious company of the apostles, to whom our Lord promised that "they should sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." They are the leaders of that heavenly army, and all the nations of the earth are enrolled under their standards: they are the reapers who went out to the harvest with their sickles, and have brought home their sheaves: "Going, they went and wept casting their seeds; but coming, they shall come with joyfulness, carrying their sheaves" (Ps. cxxv. 6). With them are associated a host of apostolic men, who have shared in their office on earth—the apostles of many countries: St. Gregory and St. Augustine, of England; St. Patrick, the apostle of Ireland; St. Boniface, of Germany; St. Francis Xavier, the apostle of the Indies, and numberless others, who have carried on the work of the apostles to our own time. How grand and glorious will each one of these saints be as he offers to God the harvest of souls which comes in from the fields which he watered with his tears, and, perhaps, consecrated by his blood!

And here stands the white-robed army of martyrs, with their palm branches of victory—who, because they have fought the good fight and gained the crown by their own blood, have a special claim to be heard on behalf of their brethren: "And they cried with a loud voice, saying: How long, O God, holy and true, dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth? and white stoles were given to each one of them, and they were told that they should rest yet a little time till their fellow-servants and their brethren, who were to be slain even as they, should be filled up" (Apoc. vi. 10).

Apostles and martyrs, confessors and virgins, stand in their companies around the throne: saints of every rank and degree, whose sanctity shed lustre on the thrones of kings, or shone forth from the poor garments of beggars, what matters it now? Saints who have for ages been the patterns of mankind, and whose names have been ever in men's mouths, and, perhaps, just as many saints of whom the world knew nothing, and whom God alone understood. All these, the chiefs and heroes of the heavenly army, we celebrate on this day.

But heaven is not made up of heroic souls—they are not all chieftains and heroes in that host: "And after this I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes, and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in the sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice, saying: Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb . . . these are they who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in the temple: and He that sitteth upon the throne shall dwell over them. They shall not hunger nor thirst any more: neither shall the sun fall on them, nor any heat, for the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall rule them, and lead them to the fountains of the waters of life: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes" (Apoc. vii. 9).

This "great crowd, that no man could number," is the

special object of our devotion on this day. They, my brethren, are now the saints reigning with Christ; but once they were like ourselves. They were, most of them, not heroes, but ordinary Christians, living the very same lives that we do; they neither worked miracles nor saw visions; they got to heaven by no unusual path, but had to toil along the ordinary road with ourselves. They had, perhaps, the same hard and commonplace work to attend to, the same temptations to resist and dangers to fear; they were fathers and mothers of families, tradesmen and artizans, servants and masters. They fell into sin and repented—they went to confession and Communion as we do, and, perhaps, knelt at our own altar—and now they are "the saints reigning with Christ."

If we did but know the secret history of some of these souls—who and what they were on earth, and how they contrived to save their souls—how many trials they had to bear, and how God helped them in all—we should be wonderfully encouraged. How often did they seem to "faint in the way," and, perhaps, fall under "the burden of the day and the heats;" they were, perhaps, again and again, ready to despair, the weight of the cross and the storm of temptation seemed more than flesh and blood could bear, but God's grace was found sufficient for them, and "virtue was made perfect in infirmity." They were in the midst of sin, and lived, it may be, surrounded by all the allurements and abominations of the enemy, and, perhaps, they fell, but God's hand raised them up and kept them, and now there is not on them even the odour of the fire through which they have passed. On earth, perhaps, they complained as we do, and thought their lot hard and their trials excessive, but now every one of them cries out with St. Paul that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

What matters it now that they were poor and despised whilst on earth? that they had to bear hardship and sickness, hunger and thirst? that, perhaps, they did not know where to lay their heads? These things were hard and bitter to them once, as they are to us, but now they are

like the troubled dream of a moment, swallowed up in a joyful awakening.

And how did all these saints get to heaven? They had the very same means that we have, and no others. God's revelation and the Church's guidance was the same, for "Thou, O God, endurest for ever, and Thy memorial to all generations" (Ps. ci. 13). The enemies they had to fight against were the same: the devil, the world, and the flesh did not spare them any more than they spare us; they had the same Sacraments that we have, and had to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. ii. 12).

They got to heaven by patience—they persevered, they prayed, they resisted, it may be, "even unto blood fighting against sin." Their motto was: "My soul hath relied on His word, my soul hath hoped in the Lord: from the morning watch even until night let Israel hope in the Lord." "Hope in God, for I will still give praise to Him, the salvation of my countenance and my God" (Ps. xlii. 6). Let us look up to heaven and follow them in this path of patience; they are our brethren, our relations, it may be our parents, brothers and sisters, or, perhaps, our intimate friends, and they call on us to walk in their footsteps, and encourage us to fight the good fight, as they have done, that we may one day share in their crowns.

Oh, how varied is that blessed crowd of "all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues!" How widely different was their state on earth! Here all the nations are represented, and, as it were, the history of mankind is told. Here are men of ancient times, lords of the world in their day, Greeks and Romans, and all the representatives of the older civilization, and the barbarous nations that succeeded them; the ages of faith produced their thousands of simple souls; the deserts sent forth their solitaries, and the cloister its monks; kings and soldiers, gallant hosts of Crusaders, it may be, labourers and mechanics, poor slaves and the outcasts of men, all come to swell the numbers of that happy assembly.

A thousand differences of race and language, prejudice

and education, divided them on earth; but all these are now swept away. The rich join hands with the poor, the learned are united in fellowship with the ignorant; "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, for they are all one in Christ Jesus" (Gal. iv. 28). They are now one family, standing around one throne, all "inebriated with the plenty of God's house, and all made to drink of the torrent of His pleasure" (Ps. xxxv. 9).

How unlike, too, were they in their history! The penitent sinner, whom the Good Shepherd brought home after long wanderings, is to be found there, and those who have scarcely sullied their baptismal innocence; holy souls who, "being made perfect in a short space, fulfilled a long time," and servants who have borne the burden of the day and the heat. There is place for all characters and dispositions: for Peter and John, for Martha and Mary. How unlike, and yet how like! Every soul in that great assembly was redeemed by the sovereign merits of our Lord Jesus Christ, and bought, not with corruptible gold and silver, but with the Precious Blood of Christ (1 St. Peter i. 18).

They have all washed their garments and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, and all raise their voices to Him in thankfulness, "because Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God in Thy blood out of every tribe and tongue, and people and nation, and hast made us to our God a kingdom" (Apoc. v. 9). They were, moreover, all alike in this, that whatever may have been their lives, when Christ called them they were found watching. Each of them was found ready with his wedding garment, and his light burning in his hand. "Let your loins be girded and lamps burning in your hands" (St. Luke xii. 35). In this way alone can men enter into the kingdom of God.

With this glorious army we are in communion; we do not look at them as we do at the stars, which are beyond our reach. They are our brethren and fellow-servants, and there is a constant interchange of prayer and blessing, like the angels whom Jacob saw ascending and descending between heaven and earth.

The glorious Communion of Saints seems redoubled on this day, and whilst the hymns of joy are still lingering in our ears, we hear the solemn words, "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord," and a new division of the Universal Church is before us—the realm of sadness and patience—the Church of the holy souls in purgatory.

I will conclude with an extract from the saint whose feast we celebrate to-morrow—a saint of our own country of the seventh century—the Venerable Bede. The beauty and authority of his words may well complete what I have been able to say on this feast:

Dearly beloved brethren: This day we keep, with one great cry of joy, a feast in memory of all God's holy children—His children whose presence is a gladness to heaven—His children whose prayers are a blessing to earth—His children whose victories are the crown of the Holy Church—His chosen, whose testifying is the more glorious in honour, as the agony in which it was given was the sterner in intensity, for as the dreader grew the battle, so the grander grew the fighters, and the triumph of martyrdom waxed the more incisive by the multiplicity of suffering; and the heavier the torment, the heavier the prize. And it is our Mother the Catholic Church, spread out far and wide through all this planet, it is she that hath learnt, in Christ Jesus her head, not to fear shame, nor cross, nor death, but waxed lealer and lealer, and, not by fighting, but by enduring, hath breathed into all that noble band who have come up to the bitter starting-post, the hope of conquest and glory which hath warmed them manfully to accept the race.

Of a verity, thou art blessed, O my Mother the Church! The blaze of God's mercy beateth full upon thee; thine adornment is the glorious blood of victorious martyrs, and thy raiment the virgin whiteness of untarnished orthodoxy. Thy garlands lack neither roses nor lilies.

And now, dearly beloved brethren, let each one of us strive to gain the goodly crown of one sort or the other, either the glistening whiteness of purity or the red dye of suffering. In the army of heaven peace and war have both chaplets of their own, to crown Christ's soldiers withal.

Moreover, to this also hath the unutterable and boundless goodness of God seen, that He spreadeth not the time of working and wrestling, neither maketh it long nor everlasting, and, as it were, but for a moment: so that, in this short and scanty life, there is wrestling and working, but the crown and the prize is in a life which is eternal. So the work is soon over, but the wage is paid for ever. And when the night of this world is over, the saints are to see the clearness of the essential light and to receive a blessedness outweighing the pangs of any torment, as testifieth the apostle Paul when he saith: "The sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Rom. viii. 18).

Oh, with what a passion of welcome doth the land above receive them that are coming home from the battle, and go forth to meet them that bear the spoils of the down-trodden foe! The men who walk in the procession of victory are mingled with women who have conquered world and weakness together, and there are also damsels and lads who have understood more than the ancients, because they have kept the precepts of the Eternal. But, besides these, there is another great host, who will have an entry into the everlasting palace, even they who have kept pure the unity of the faith in the bond of peace, and the unshaken observance of the commandments given us from heaven.

Come now, therefore, my brethren, and let us enter upon the way; let us turn our faces homeward and heavenward, towards that land wherein our names are written down, and we are citizens elect. We are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the household of God (Eph. ii. 19); yea, heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. viii. 17). Bravery can open, and lealty keep wide, the entry for us into that city. Let us think, then, for a while what is the brilliant happiness of that city—that is to say, as well as we can, for what it really is no words can utter.

Concerning that city it is written in a certain place: "Sorrow and mourning shall flee away." What can be

more blessed than that life wherein poverty will not threaten, nor sickness weaken? There, there will be no hurts and no angering. There, there will be no envying; there will burn no covetousness, no ambition of honour or seeking of power will give trouble there. There, the devil will no more be an object of fear; there, no evil spirits lie in wait; the dread of hell will be gone there. There, there will be no death either for the body or for the soul, but life glorious in the gift of immortality.

There, there will never be any differences, but all things attained, all things suiting, for all the saints will be at one together, peace and gladness reigning over all things. All things there will be quiet and still, and the glory exceeding great—not such as any glory now, but as much more excelling in splendour as it excelleth in blessing, even as it is written that that "city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof" (Apoc. xxi. 23). And in that light the saints "shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that have turned many to righteousness, as the stars for ever and ever" (Dan. xii. 3).

By reason of that light there will be no night there, nor darkness there. There no clouds will ever gather. No cold will bite there; there no heat will scorch. But, instead thereof, there will be for ever such an order as "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man" (1 Cor. ii. 9), saving them who are found worthy to be there, "whose names are in the book of life" (Phil. iv. 3), who "have washed their robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb. Therefore, they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night" (Apoc. vii. 14). There, there will be no growing old, nor any of the distresses of age, but "all come unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph. iv. 13).

But, in truth, besides these things, will be companionship with the hosts of angels and archangels: to enjoy the fellowship of thrones and dominions, of principalities and powers, and all the forces of heaven: to gaze upon

the armies of the saints, glittering as stars glitter not here. Patriarchs radiant in faith realized, prophets rejoicing in hope crowned, apostles judging the twelve tribes of Israel, martyrs flashing in the red crowns of their victory, virgins crowned with white chaplets, dancing in companies, bearing garlands of snowy whiteness.

Therefore, may it be our delight to go on to this prize of good living. Freely and cheerfully let us strive in the race, running under the eyes of God and Christ. We have already taken a station above floating and earthly things, and let us allow no love for things fleeting to hamper our running. If the last day shall find us lithe and speedful in the race of good living, we shall never have to complain that our Master is a scanty rewarder of our works. He that giveth a red crown for suffering under persecution, the same giveth a white crown to them that, under peace, prevail in battles of righteousness. Neither Abraham, nor Isaac, nor Jacob were slain, and, nevertheless, in honour for faith and righteousness, they have gained the first place amongst the patriarchs, and it is to sit down with them in the kingdom of God, that are gathered the faithful, the righteous, and the praiseworthy. We must remember that it is God's will, and not our own will, that we must do, for he that doeth His will abideth for ever.

Wherefore, dearly beloved brethren, with mind clear, faith firm, courage true, love thorough, let us be ready to do whatever God willeth, keeping stoutly all the Commandments of the Lord, having innocency in simplicity, peaceableness in love, modesty in lowliness; in ministering, diligence; in helping them that toil, watchfulness; in succouring the poor, mercifulness; in standing up for the truth, firmness; in keeping of discipline, sternness; lest we be found wanting in any good work. These are the steps which the saints, who have already gone home, have left marked for us, that we may be able to keep in their footprints, and so to follow them into their joy *(Brev. Lessons, Marquis of Bute's translation)*.

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Catholic Sermons

BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXVI.

The Holy Souls.

"Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, because the hand of the Lord hath touched me" (Job xix. 21).

On the day of the Holy Souls, my dear brethren, it seems as if the cry for help were sent up from every churchyard—the cry of parents, relatives, and of a vast crowd of the faithful departed, calling upon their brethren on earth for sympathy and assistance. And how does the Church on earth respond? On All Souls' Day, in some Catholic countries, the cemeteries are thronged with mourners, and garlands of flowers, and wreaths and crosses are lovingly laid on the graves of the dead; children go to pray over the tombs of their parents; fathers and mothers to visit the place where their little children are laid, and the living and the dead seem, for a moment, once more united.

But it is not a mere celebration to bring back the memory of the dead. It would be but a poor and empty thing if it were merely to honour the ashes of those who are gone, and to renew unavailing sorrow in the hearts of the living. In the Catholic Church the love of friends takes a more active and reasonable form; we mourn for our deceased brethren, that we may help them; and recall their memory, that we may excite ourselves to pray for them more diligently. The churches are crowded, and everywhere the voice of supplication and intercessory prayer is raised to heaven for the souls of the faithful. First comes the solemn public commemoration of all the faithful departed on the day following the Feast of All Saints; and this is followed by special offices, both public and private, to ask the mercy of God for different individuals and classes of people. In most churches Mass

is celebrated every year, at that time, for the deceased benefactors of the parish and diocese, and another Mass is said for all the departed members of each congregation; whilst at every Catholic cemetery a Mass is celebrated for those whose bodies are there deposited.

The whole month of November is dedicated to prayers for the dead, prayers for the faithful in general—for deceased bishops and clergy, for parents, friends, and benefactors, for those who have died during the past year, for those who have perished in war, or by sudden death of any kind. The faithful are encouraged at this time to make special remembrance of their own departed friends, to have Mass celebrated for them, or, at least, to offer up fervent prayer for the repose of their souls. It is not as if prayer for the dead was to be confined to this month; the subject is brought before us specially, that we may be reminded of the duty of praying diligently at all times for the faithful departed.

Let us turn our minds, then, to the Holy Souls, to consider their state and their claims upon us, that we may worthily enter into the feelings of Holy Church at this season. The souls in purgatory, the Church suffering. constitutes one great division of the Universal Church of God. It is the realm of darkness and suffering, but, at the same time, of patience, hope and love; it is the kingdom where God's justice and mercy are both most conspicuously displayed. How vast is this realm! we cannot picture to ourselves the number of its inhabitants; they seem to us like the sands on the sea-shore, of all ages and from all countries; like the blessed in heaven, they are of all "nations and tribes and peoples and tongues." Of all who die, how few there are that are fit to pass at once into the presence of the All-holy God—how few there are who in life have "paid the last farthing" that was owed to His justice! A few holy people there are, perhaps, who on earth so watch over their own hearts, and love God so much, that they have contracted no debt to be paid hereafter, and a few who lead lives of penance and patient suffering, and so bear the pains of purgatory in this life; these have entered at once into the kingdom of God, but

the great mass, even of good people, leave much to be corrected, and many debts to be paid: "The fire shall try every man's work," and "he shall be saved, yet so as by fire."

These suffering souls, although the hand of God has touched them, and is still heavy upon them, are most dear to Him. They are called the Holy Souls, because they are confirmed for ever in the favour of God; they are not yet the saints, because the stain and burden of sin still rests upon them, and keeps them from the enjoyment of God's presence, but they are already perfect in His love. On earth they had many failings and weaknesses; their hearts were not altogether right with God, and even the best of their works were alloyed with human infirmity. They gave too much of their hearts to creatures, or were wrapped up in themselves, and "made subject to vanity," and so the perfect love of God was obscured; but now all this is past, and there is nothing to come between the creature and his Creator. No one on earth can love God so perfectly as these Holy Souls now love Him, because none can see Him so clearly; no one can do His will with such absolute submission and patience as they do.

"The fire shall try each man's work." We do not know what this fire will be which God has appointed to complete the purification of these chosen souls, and make them fit for His kingdom; but we know that the "judgments of the Lord are a great abyss," and must be ever terrible to His creatures. "I am He that searcheth the reins and the heart, and I will give to every one of you according to your works" (Apoc. ii. 23). "Who shall be able to think of the day of His coming? and who shall stand to see Him? for He is like a refining fire, and like the fuller's herb. And He shall sit refining and cleansing the silver, and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and He shall refine them as gold and as silver" (Mal. iii. 2).

The Catholic Church does not teach us anything definite, either about the nature or the duration of the pains of purgatory; but, for all we can tell, the punishment of

sin there, may be more severe and more prolonged than anything we have to endure in this life: we only know that in God's sight "a thousand years are as one day, and one day as a thousand years," and that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God" (Heb. x. 31).

And now, my dear brethren, let me say a few words once again on the doctrine of purgatory and the explanation of it, since a clear idea of the faith must be the foundation of all true devotion. The Church teaches that all who die in a state of grace will be saved—that is, that all who are not entirely cut off from the favour and friendship God at the hour of death, will, sooner or later, enter into the kingdom of God. At the same time, it teaches that "God will render to every one according to his work," and that, "every idle word that men shall speak, they shall render an account of it in the day of judgment" (St. Matt. xxxvi.): she teaches also that "nothing defiled shall enter heaven," but that "the fire shall try each man's work"—that is, that all the imperfections and sins of a man's life must, in some way, be purified and atoned for before he can be admitted to the vision of God.

From this teaching it is evident that there must be "a place where souls suffer for a time after death on account of their sins." It is impossible, as far as we can see, that God can render to every man according to his works in this life: certainly He does not appear to do so in the ordinary course of His Providence. It stands to common sense, therefore, that there must be some time and place where the inequalities which strike us so much here on earth shall be redressed, and where the rigour and exactitude of God's justice may be vindicated. There must be some place where years of sin and carelessness may be atoned, and where the patient suffering of the just shall be seen to avail. Because men are faithful servants of God, He does not overlook their sins; on the contrary, nothing is more striking in the Holy Scripture than the severity with which God punished even small faults committed by His servants. He punished them, that He might have

mercy on them, and this is the ordinary course of His justice, for, as St. Paul says: "Whom the Lord loveth, He chastiseth: and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth" (Heb. xii. 6).

Our Lord Himself points out the distinction between the greater and the lesser punishment—the punishment due to rebellion, and the punishment due to mere carelessness: "And the servant who knew the will of his Lord and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes; but he that knew not, and did things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes" (St. Luke xii. 47).

Without the doctrine of a place of temporal punishment, it is impossible to form to ourselves any intelligible idea of the dealings of God with His creatures, or to reconcile the obvious facts of life with the emphatic declaration we so constantly meet, that God will render to every man according to his works. It constantly happens that we lay our departed brethren in the grave, and, with great confidence in the mercy of God, we hope for their salvation: yet we cannot shut our eyes to the faults they have committed. We cannot fail to see that their lives have been very imperfect, and, perhaps, sinful and scandalous, and that they have done very little for God's service, and very little to atone for their errors: Are we to believe that they have at once passed from a most imperfect life here into the everlasting enjoyment of God? No; such an idea is contrary to all that God has told us of His judgments; but we may still hope for such a one that he will "be saved yet so as by fire."

But people sometimes object that this doctrine is not explicitly laid down in the Holy Scriptures: let us see what they do say. First, the passage of St. Paul, from which I have already quoted: "other foundation no man can lay, but that which is laid, which is Christ Jesus. Now, if any man build upon this foundation, gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; every man's work shall be manifest: for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire, and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's

work abide, which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward: if any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved yet so as by fire" (1 Cor. iii. 11). It is difficult to conceive any plainer indication of purgatory: St. Paul is obviously speaking, not of the reprobate, but of the just—of those who have built on the foundation of Jesus Christ. He is also speaking, not of the present time, but of the day of the Lord, when the building is completed, and is to be tried, and he plainly tells us that defects will be found which must be purged by fire. What else can he mean by "he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire"?

We will now take a text from the Old Testament, from the history of Judas Machabeus: "And the day following Judas came with his company to take away the bodies of them that were slain, and to bury them with their kinsmen in the sepulchres of their fathers. And they found under the coats of the slain some of the donaries of the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbiddeth to the Jews, so that all plainly saw that for this cause they were slain. Then they all blessed the just judgment of the Lord, who had discovered the things that were hidden. And so, betaking themselves to prayers, they besought him that the sin which had been committed might be forgotten. But the most valiant Judas exhorted the people to keep themselves from sin, for as much as they saw before their eyes what had happened because of the sins of those that were slain, and, making a gathering, he sent twelve thousand drachmas of silver to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead, thinking well and religiously concerning the resurrection. For if he had not hoped that they that were slain should rise again, it would have seemed superfluous and vain to pray for the dead. And because he considered that they who had fallen asleep with godliness had great grace laid up for them. It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sin" (2 Mach. xxxix. 46).

This passage, my dear brethren, as I dare say you well know, is taken from a book which Protestants do not

receive as part of the Holy Scripture; nobody, however, doubts that it is authentic, and that it describes to us the belief of the Jews at the time just before our Lord's coming. The Jews, then, believed that it was "a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead." Their departed brethren might still be helped, and, by prayer, freed from the bonds of sin, in which they were detained, and, therefore, it was a duty to pray for them, "that they may be loosed from sins." Now, let us see what Christians thought when the Church was first established. Tertullian, almost the earliest father of the Latin Church, tells us their practice; he speaks of a woman whose husband is dead, and says: "Wherefore, also, does she pray for his soul, and begs for him in the interim refreshment, and in the first resurrection companionship, and offers on the anniversary days of his falling asleep." The doctrine he sums up in these words: "Briefly, since we understand by that *prison*, which the Gospel points out, the places below, and the *last farthing* we interpret to be any small delinquency to be there expiated by a delay of resurrection; no one will doubt that the soul makes some amends in the places below, without the fulness of the resurrection by the flesh also." Origen, the great writer of the Greek Church, who lived about the same time, says: "For this cause, therefore, he that is saved is *saved by fire*, that if he happen to have anything of the nature of lead commingled with him, *that* the fire may burn and melt away, that all men may become pure gold, because the gold of the land which the saints are to possess is said to be pure; and, *as the furnace tryeth gold, so doth temptation try the just.* All, therefore, must come to the fire, all must come to the furnace. *For the Lord sits and refines, and He shall purify the sons of Juda.* But, also, when we shall have come to that place, if one shall have brought many good works, and some little iniquity, that little is melted away and purified in the fire like lead, and all remains pure gold" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. pp. 145, 146, 147).

The same author, in another place, says more explicitly: "There are other sins which, when we commit them in

ignorance, there is, I believe, decreed and prepared for us, by the command of God, a place where we must dwell for a certain time" (p. 149). And now let us see what was the custom of the Church two centuries later. St. Cyril of Jerusalem, in the fourth century, says: "Then, also, we commemorate those who have fallen to sleep before us: first, patriarchs, prophets, apostles, that God, by their prayers and intercessions, would receive our petition; then, also, on behalf of the holy fathers and bishops who have fallen asleep before us, and of all, in short, that have already fallen asleep amongst us, believing that it will be a very great assistance to the souls for which the supplication is put up, while the holy and most awful Sacrifice lies open to view" (p. 162).

But the voice of the early Church is most emphatically heard in the language of the ancient liturgies, which are still in use in various parts of the world, both in and out of the communion of the Catholic Church. These liturgies all agree in offering up prayers for the dead. In the Roman Mass we say every day: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of Thy servants and handmaids N. and N., who are gone before us with the sign of faith, and sleep in the sleep of peace. Grant, we beseech Thee, O Lord, to them, and all that rest in Christ, a place of refreshment, light, and peace: through the same Christ our Lord. Amen."

The Eastern liturgies make the same petition in similar words. For example, the Coptic liturgy has this prayer: "Be mindful also, O Lord, of all those who have gone to sleep and rest, in the priesthood and in every rank of the laity. Vouchsafe, O Lord, to give to their souls rest in the bosom of holy Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; lead them unto a verdant place by the waters of refreshment, into the paradise of delight, into the place whence sorrow, grief, and lamentation are banished away in the light of the saints" (*Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. p. 204).

I have given these passages from early writers, not by way of *proof* of the existence of purgatory; the only one thing which is sufficient proof for any doctrine is the etaching of the Catholic Church, and that is sufficient by itself. The Church teaches it now, and by that we

know that she always taught it, and received it from her Divine Founder. All other testimonies are not for ourselves, but for others. Protestants fancy that the doctrine of purgatory is a new thing, whereas it was clearly known amongst the Jews before our Lord's coming, is confirmed by very strong passages of Holy Scripture, and is plainly seen in every age of the Church's history.

And now let us return to the practical and devotional part of the subject which this season presents to us. The Holy Souls are, as we have said, dear to God, and they ought also to be very dear to us. They are specially our brethren, and many of them but a short time since were sharing our earthly trials. There is not one of us, I suppose, who would not find in that vast assemblage many of his own family, his parents, perhaps, or his own personal friends, those whose faces are still familiar to his eyes, and whose voices still sound in his ears. How closely have we been connected with many who are now in purgatory! how important a part they played in our lives! They were instructors and benefactors; they loved us on earth, and perhaps worked hard to do us good; year after year we saw their faces around us; side by side we knelt in the Church of God; together we shared in all the joy and sorrow of this life; and now they are gone and we are remaining—they are suffering for their sins, and we—are we doing much for them, or have we forgotten them?

Would that we could realize the state of the faithful departed! It is a condition of patient love, suffering, and helplessness; they stand on the very brink of eternal rest and eternal happiness, and yet they cannot reach it. After all the pains and dangers of exile, they have reached their true home, and the door is fast shut against them. They have seen their Creator, face to face, and now their hearts can never rest till they can enjoy the vision of Him for ever. Who can conceive the longing which the Christian soul will feel during the painful time of separation! "As the hart panteth after the fountains of water, so my soul panteth after Thee, O God. My soul hath thirsted after the Strong, Living God;

when shall I come and appear before the face of God? My tears have been my bread, day and night, whilst it is said to me daily, Where is thy God?" (Ps. xli. 2.)

But it is not merely the absence of joy, it is the fire which tries and purifies the soul, and they have to pass through it, and bear its pains; the burning love of God which possessed them, the ardent desires by which they are consumed, the angelic purity and patience which they display in the midst of their pain, are all insufficient to ward off one drop of that fiery torrent.

"In pains beyond all earthly pains,
Favourites of Jesus there they lie,
Letting the fire burn out their stains,
And worshipping God's purity.
Spouses of Christ they are, for He
Was wedded to them by His Blood,
And angels o'er their destiny
In wondering adoration brood."

—*Father Faber.*

And in the midst of all this pain they turn to us for help: "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you, my friends, for the hand of the Lord hath touched me." Can we be indifferent to such an appeal?

But, first, let us consider how it is that we are able to help them when their condition is so much superior to ours. We are in the darkness, and they have gone out into the light: a thousand things, which are obscure and perplexing to us, are clear as the noonday sun to them; they are holy, and we are sinners; they love God with the very love of the blessed in heaven, whilst our hearts are cold: how can we help them? It is true they have all these advantages, but there is one thing they have not—they have not access to the Precious Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the treasures of grace which He purchased for them. The time was when He put all His blessed merits into their hands, as now He does into ours; they had the very key of the treasury, but they forgot to use it whilst they had it in their keeping, and now the night has come, "when no man could work."

Their time has now passed. All their hope is still in the Precious Blood of Jesus—that alone will bring them

to their eternal rest—but they cannot put out their hands to that Precious Treasure. They can do nothing for themselves, and all their patience and love are without the slightest merit in the sight of God: the little things they once did were precious before God, but the great things they now suffer are as nothing.

"Be at agreement with thy adversary whilst thou art in the way with him, lest, perhaps, the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Amen, I say to thee, thou shalt not go out from thence till thou repay the last farthing" (St. Matt. v. 24). Their time for mercy is past, and the day for justice has arrived: they are cast into prison, and must now pay the last farthing.

But, even in the midst of His severe justice, God is merciful, and He allows their brethren to come to their aid. Poor sinners as we are, we are not only allowed, but encouraged, to come forward and offer payment for them—not from anything which we can do ourselves, but from the treasures of Christ, which are still in our hands. It has pleased our Lord to make us one family, and, therefore, it is His will that we should be in a great measure dependent one on another. On earth a great proportion of God's mercies, both spiritual and temporal, comes to us through the hands of our brethren—and it is His will that, even after death, the power of mutual assistance should remain. When we pray for the dead, and endeavour to help them in discharging their heavy debt, we are the instruments of God's mercy, and we are carrying out His will, just as much as when we show charity to our brethren upon earth.

And now, let us consider what is our duty to the souls of the faithful departed. We must take care, in the first place, not to forget them, or become indifferent to their welfare. Every day, not only in this month of November, but throughout the year, we ought to offer up, at least, one fervent prayer for the souls of the faithful. To remind us of this duty, the Church concludes almost every devotion with the ejaculation, "May the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest

in peace." This is not a mere form, but is intended to keep the thought of the suffering Church always before us, that we may be earnest in helping the souls of the faithful.

God will certainly repay us for our charity in due season, "for with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (St. Matt. vii. 2). In a few years, or, indeed, in a few days, we ourselves may be in the midst of the Holy Souls, sharing their lot, and then we shall reap the reward of our charity, or, it may be, suffer the punishment of our negligence.

But we must remember that we can only aid them through the merits of our Lord Jesus Christ. He now gives Himself to us, and make us, in a measure, the dispensers of the treasures of His Precious Blood: in the Mass, where His Body and Blood are offered in sacrifice; in the Holy Communion, where we receive Him; in the indulgences granted by the Church; in every fervent prayer we offer up through Him, we become partakers of His merits. All these we may offer up for the souls of the faithful departed, and the Lord will receive our offering towards the payment of the debt they owe to His justice.

We must take care, however, to be ourselves in a state of grace; how shall we dare to intercede for our brethren, if we are not, at least, trying to be faithful servants? How can we think that our Lord will hear us for others if we are, ourselves, rebellious and ungrateful? Let us, then, love God will all our hearts, and serve Him with all our strength, and we may be sure that He will hear us when we intercede for our brethren.

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXVII.

Mary's Work in Redemption.

BY REV. GEORGE EDWARDS.

"And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord : and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His handmaid : for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed" (St. Luke i. 46—48).

During this month the Church keeps the feast of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin. It is an ancient tradition that, in her infancy, Mary was solemnly presented in the temple and there dedicated to God. She had been preserved by a special Providence from every taint of sin, and was thus consecrated to God from her childhood, because she had been chosen out for a position and dignity which no other creature could possess.

And so I will speak to you this morning of our Mother Mary, as she existed in the mind and plan of the Eternal Father before all creation; as she was in her day of life and work and sorrow on earth; as she is now crowned with surpassing beauty, endowed with singular power, enthroned beside the "great white throne" in heaven, our advocate with God, our Mother, Patroness, and Queen.

And we will approach this subject—the position and office of our Lady in the economy of creation and redemption—as we should approach all sacred subjects, with a childlike faith, with reverence of mind and heart, with eagerness to know more of the gracious Mother whom God has given us for our stay and comfort in this troubled world. Well, then, far back in the past eternity, the type and image of Mary existed in the mind of God. From that beginning, which had no beginning, the idea of His future creations was in the Divine mind. Before the first man gazed with wonder and joy upon the rivers of paradise—before the first light of morning broke

through that primeval gloom which lay like a shroud upon the "face of the deep," on tree and fruit and leaf—before the earth was made, the Almighty Maker had mapped out clearly before His all-seeing eyes all the things which He would make and do. The wisdom of God, His foreknowledge, and His purposes are coeval with Himself; and so with the purposes of God towards Mary. She had always been in the Eternal mind. Hence the Church puts into her mouth the words, "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of His ways, before He made anything, from the beginning. I was set up from eternity, and of old, before the earth was made. The depths were not as yet, and I was already conceived, neither had the fountains of waters as yet sprung out; the mountains with their huge bulk had not as yet been established. . . . When He prepared the heavens I was present; when, with a certain law and compass, He enclosed the depths. . . . When He balanced the foundations of the earth, I was with Him" (Prov. viii. 22-30).

God, then, always foresaw that He would create the world and man—that man, in the moment of His creation, would be placed in a state of supernatural grace, with a title to a supernatural reward in heaven—that man would, by his deliberate act, cast himself down from his high estate, from the love and service of his Maker. Further, God the Father saw that, in spite of man's offence—nay, because of it—He would send into the world His only-beloved Son, who should take human nature, so that, as by the first Adam all men fell, so by the second Adam all men might rise again. The works of God are great, as He is great; His love must be lavish, His mercy must be boundless. The Divine self-abasement must be deeper than all other humilities; the Divine Son must strip Himself, as it were, of His Godhead, and narrow down His immensity, and hide the glory, before which cherubim and seraphim veil their eager gaze, within the childish beauty of the Babe of Bethlehem. "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and His name shall be call Emmanuel" (Isaias vii. 14)—that is, God with man, God become man, God the Son breathing with childish

lips the breath of human life, raising little yearning eyes, lifting delicate infant hands—to whom, my brethren? To a human mother, His own and very Mother, who had given Him bone of her bone, from whose pure and gentle heart had come to His the Precious Blood which later dyed the grass in the olive garden and consecrated the wood of the Cross.

God the Father, then, meant from all eternity that God the Son should have a human Mother. He had no father on earth, though He deigned to be subject to St. Joseph. He was God of God. He was to be made in time, made of a woman; but he was to be born by a miraculous birth, and His Blessed Mother should be known to all generations as the Virgin of virgins, the breathing embodiment of all Christian perfections. And so God looked down the long range of years, through all generations of the daughters of men, and His eyes lit upon one who should be in a world darkened by sin, "as the lily among thorns," pure of heart, and beautiful in the whiteness of her soul, in the midst of a hard, coarse, dissolute generation. She should be singular in her birth and life, in her natural gifts and supernatural graces. She should be the reward to St. Anne and St. Joachim in their old age, for their years of simple faith and piety. She should be born, and live and die in a holy and noble poverty, though sprung from the royal line of David. She should be born in an age which had almost wholly broken loose from all moral restraints, and yet should so pass through life that no passing breath of contamination should blurr or tarnish, for one moment, the pure mirror of her soul. Though belonging to a proud, stubborn, stiff-necked people, she should be so docile, so modest, so lowly in her thoughts, as to bear, throughout all time after the Incarnation, the name of God's handmaiden: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." She should be stainless in her death, stainless in her life, stainless at her birth, like John the Baptist, immaculate, as no other creature of God had been since the fall, from the first dawn of her being upon this earth. The light of supernatural faith, the sweetness of supernatural hope, the tenderness of supernatural charity,

were on her soul at its creation. "Fair as the moon, bright as the sun," it came from the hand of God as it returned to Him.

My dear brethren, do you not remember how, in the old days, long before Christ or His Holy Mother was born, Gideon went forth in the morning to look upon the fleece of wool which he had stretched out upon the ground overnight? Overnight he had asked a sign from God, "And Gideon said to God: If Thou wilt save Israel by my hand, as Thou hast said, I will put this fleece of wool on the floor; if there be dew in the fleece only, and if it be dry on all the ground beside, I shall know that by my hand, as Thou hast said, Thou wilt deliver Israel. And it was so. And, rising before day, wringing the fleece, he filled a vessel with dew" (Judges vi.) Thus, upon the hard, dry ground, the white fleece, moist and bright with dew, lay in the morning light, a token and promise from God.

Thus, in the earliest morning of its existence, although, since sin came into the world, all other souls had been dry, and hard, and darkened in their dawn, the soul of Mary lay under the eyes of God, fresh and bright, steeped in the dews of grace, and breathing around the sweetness of heaven, the beautiful token to men that the day which prophets and kings had desired to see, and had not seen, was close at hand—the promise that Wisdom, having made itself a dwelling-place, would soon make its home on earth. In this perfect manner, then, our Heavenly Father made the future Mother of His Divine Son, and when she had lived on this earth some fifteen, perhaps eighteen, years, during which, as her form and face grew in stature and beauty, the soul within expanded from grace to grace, God sent to Mary His messenger Gabriel —the herald of the Incarnation.

"The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the Virgin's name was Mary. And the angel being come in said to her: "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee; blessed art thou amongst women.'" And then, because the humble heart of Mary was troubled and shrank from this

greeting, the angel continued: "Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a Son! and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High." Then Mary startled, and wondering how these things could come about, questions the angel, saying: "How shall this be done?" And the angel, answering, said to her: "The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee, and, therefore, also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." And Mary said: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord: be it done to me according to thy word."

Thus, "the mystery hidden from the beginning" was wrought out and unfolded itself. Thus, the awful spirit of God passed down over Nazareth, and the Eternal Son moved down from heaven to take human nature. Thus, Mary, shrinking from all dignities, became the peerless Mother of God, and in the grey dawn of the first Christmas morning held in her gentle arms the "Word made flesh," and angels held their breath to see, as "she laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn," and in the valley at the foot of the slopes of Bethlehem watching shepherds saw the heavens brighten, saw the angels breaking through the veil, and heard the words which declared that the prophecies which, from time to time, had lit up with gleams of hope the darkness of five thousand years, were now fulfilled. "This day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord" (St. Luke ii.).

Blessed be God! Blessed be the Mother of our God! Who shall say what Mary felt that Christmas morning? Who can fathom the depths of her mother's joy, because, not a man-child only, but a God-child, was born into this world? It was like—it *was* the joy of heaven, for God is Heaven, and Jesus was God. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive" the joy which Jesus gave to His Immaculate Mother on that sacred Christmas Day.

"My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath

rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath exalted the humility of His handmaid; for behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." This was Mary's thanksgiving after the Annunciation; in some such words, and with an ineffable love and reverence, must she have thanked Him at His birth.

God the Son was now the Son of Mary, and, as a mother is not mother of the body of her son only, but mother of the person of her son, and, as the person of Jesus was divine, as Jesus was God, Mary was the Mother of God. As such she ministered to Him in Bethlehem, in Egypt, in Nazareth, like other mothers; she fostered and nourished Him day by day; she brought Him food, and slaked His thirst, as He grew to boyhood; pined for Him when lost, rejoiced with all her heart when He was found, and went down to Nazareth with her and His foster-father, and was "subject to them;" rejoiced daily, more and more, as His sacred character unfolded, and the light of His divine nature shining through His human features, and through the perfection of His daily life and conduct, sanctified that wonderful home in Nazareth, as "He advanced in wisdom, and age, and grace with God and man." Through thirty happy years of home-life, Mary cherished her Divine Son, and, when His three years of public life were done, when that agonized vigil in Gethsemane was watched out, and Jesus hung upon the cross, "there stood by the cross of Jesus Mary, His Mother," and in her arms, when taken down from the cross, the sacred body, worn out by its struggle towards Calvary, bruised, wounded, discoloured, torn, lacerated by cross and lance, by scourge, and thorns, and nails, found rest at last.

My dear brethren, do you think the divine Motherhood of Mary ended on Calvary? Do you think that strange and sweet relationship of the creature to her Creator, planned with infinite wisdom and love from all eternity, prepared so carefully through many thousand years, from Adam to Abraham, from Abraham to David, from David to the Virgin Mary, accepted by Mary with such trustful submission, borne with such a quiet majesty of patience through the shame and bitterness of the Passion, was to

be laid down and buried away with the dead body of Jesus in Golgotha? No. God, once made man, is man for ever; and for ever next to her Divine Son in place and glory, Mary lives on, and reigns on, God's Mother in the light of the vision of God. Or, do you think that Mary, having played so leading a part in the scheme of redemption, had no part henceforth in the sanctification and salvation of man? Could it possibly be that the Virgin Mother who conceived and bore Emmanuel, having shared in His shame and sorrow, should not share also in His glory? It would be strange, indeed, if, associated so closely with Jesus in His life and death, Mary should have no portion in the glory wherewith His Father hath glorified Him in His resurrection, ascension, enthronement in heaven, or of that accidental glory with which, through these nineteen centuries, all humble, pure, and grateful Christian hearts have glorified their Lord.

The truth is that, as the work of Jesus did not end—nay, only fairly began—with His death, so also with the office of Mary towards men. She was not to be put aside, she was to be exalted more and more. "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour, because He hath exalted the humility of His handmaid, for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." By her compassion—that is, by the share she had in the sufferings of Jesus—she had earned a special office in the distribution of the merits of the Precious Blood. She had acquired a dearer right than any other mere creature to plead for sinful men. She was to be henceforth the gracious Mother and advocate of men at the eternal throne, and from henceforth, by saint and sinner alike, she was to be honoured and invoked and blessed, again and again, for graces drawn down on man by the power of her prayer. All generations, from the apostles downward, have greeted her with love and honour day by day; all lands have multiplied her shrines; all Catholic children have learnt to lisp her name at their mother's knee; all passing Catholic souls have cried to her in their extremity; all Catholic men and women, poor and wealthy, cultivated and illiterate,

turn to her instinctively in temptation or grief as children turn to their earthly mother when frightened or in need of protection or comfort: "Henceforth all generations shall call me blessed."

And in acting thus men are not only doing what is right; they are performing a duty. All graces given by God beget a duty on the part of men. The gift of the Sacraments to man begets the duty of going to the Sacraments. The gift by which God has conferred on man His own Mother, that she may be our Mother, our advocate, patroness, and helper, begets on our part the duty of life-long devotion towards her.

Now, my dear brethren, do you fulfil this duty? Do you recite the Rosary every day? Do you come to Communion on the great feasts of the Blessed Virgin? Do you bring flowers to her altar? You who are parents, do you, by word and example, teach your children to honour their heavenly Mother? Do you all, whether young or old, call to mind, distinctly and thankfully and every day, the presence of Mary near the throne of God?—the constant intercession with which she pleads for you?—the constant watch which, from her high place in heaven, she keeps over you?—the unflagging eagerness with which she listens for your every prayer, and offers it to her Divine Son? This sounds like an examination of conscience. It *is* an examination of conscience. The conscience of men and women, redeemed and sanctified by the blood of the Son of Mary, must, since the life of Jesus on earth and His death on the Cross, be examined daily, not only in the light of the eternal laws which hold through all time, but also in the light of the Christian dispensation, in the light of the laws, relations, duties essential to the "perfect law" of Christ, and neglect of the Mother of Jesus, now means for the Catholic conscience neglect of God.

Therefore, I ask you, remembering who Jesus was and how He has exalted His mother—her relation to Him and consequent relation towards us—to question your conscience and see whether you are serving our Mother Mary with that filial devotion which is her due.

If devotion to Mary is not a part of your life, your life is at fault—your faith is obscured—your love towards the Person of our Blessed Lord has grown cold—your salvation is endangered, if, indeed, the gangrene of mortal sin have not already eaten away the life and beauty of your soul. There can be no true service of Jesus in the life of a Catholic, where there is not a daily tenderness and service towards His Holy Mother. I say in the life of a Catholic, because pure and fervent Christian hearts, outside the visible unity of the Church, who do not invoke the Mother of God because early teaching has made them strangers to her power; who, if they knew better, would be, perhaps, the first to run to her for help, the first to bless her name, are to be judged, as God judges them, by the measure of their narrower faith. But, woe to that Catholic who, having received the faith of our Incarnate God in its fulness, and knowing well the office of Mary in the work of Redemption, blots out altogether, or almost altogether, from his life the gracious image of the Mother of God, and is too careless to draw down on himself, by daily prayer, a share in the graces which daily come through her immaculate hands from the Father of lights and consolations.

But I can hardly think that any of you are quite lukewarm towards our Blessed Mother. You may sometimes allow this noisy, bustling world to fill your thoughts too much; you may sometimes be careless and thoughtless, and neglect to say your Rosary, but there is an image of Mary in your heart which business or pleasure cannot wholly cloud over. Have you not treasured that image in your soul from childhood—that beautiful vision and face which brightened, with a holy Mother's love, the gloom of the cave in Bethlehem, which brightens your soul now, as I speak, with its radiance of love and heavenly hope—that face always and almost inseparably blended with that other, yet more beautiful and sacred, which looks down with an infinite patience and tenderness from "the wood of the cross." You can recall hours in your past life when you were troubled, and sorrowful, and restless, because you had offended your God, or

because the mournful shadow of death had darkened your home, when you knelt before the statue of Mary and besought her aid, and the light and peace of Heaven came down over mind and heart, sensibly and visibly almost as the sun, when the storm is spent, breaks through the gloom and clouds; or there may be moments of your life which rise again before you, from time to time, when you had deliberately, and with full knowledge, done a great sin against the majesty and holiness of God, and you hardly dared approach Him, however humbly.

Then, there arose beside you the figure of her who tended Jesus of old in His simple childish needs, who tends now the sorrowful, the weak, the sinful, as well as the holy, and led by her mother's hand, and soothed and emboldened by her mother's voice, you knelt in the shelter of the confessional, and the mercy and love of our Heavenly Father descended upon your contrite, humble heart. And can you not remember many peaceful Sunday mornings, when you knelt at the rail of the sanctuary to receive the Body and Blood of your Divine Lord, thinly veiled by the form of bread, and when, in your preparation and thanksgiving, you besought our Mother Mary to supply what was wanting in your own poor prayers?

Or, it may be, you have watched by the side of the dying —husband, or wife, or child or mother, passing in before you under the awful shadow of death—you bear, with sad distinctness, in your mind, their last words of love, or comfort, or advice, their last short ejaculations and prayers; you remember how, in their distress, the names of Jesus and Mary broke forth, and what a peace and hope, what calmness and sweetness, came over the troubled face as you said the Litany of the Blessed Virgin for them who could no longer say it distinctly themselves: "Mother of God, Comforter of the Afflicted, Help of Christians, Queen of Martyrs, Refuge of Sinners, pray for us." Thus closely —more or less—are the name, and the love, and the help of the Mother of God knit into your lives and hearts. She has sorrowed with you in your sorrow, rejoiced with you in your joy, and will, please God, to the end.

Ah, the end! We must think of that, whatever else

may fill our minds, from day to day. We must prepare and work for that end, before the "night cometh when no man can work." You are, most of you, busy men, you have occupations which tax your industry and energy greatly, and are too apt to absorb all your attention; but, in the name of God, do not allow these cares and duties of life to shut out, for one day, from your view the end which must come to them all, "because man shall go into the house of his eternity, and the mourners shall go round about in the street" (Eccl. xii.)

And, looking into the future, and facing with Christian calmness and fortitude the death we cannot shirk, I know your Catholic hearts lift themselves in hope and tenderness towards the Immaculate Mother of God. When the thought of death occurs to you, you pray that it may not come upon you suddenly, without any warning, without time for preparation, as it comes to some men here and there in the world every day that passes over our heads, as "a thief in the night," who creeps into the house with bated breath and stealthy tread, and masters his victim before he can lift a hand or cry for help. You pray, or you ought to pray, that in the closing hours of life the priest of God may be near to speak over you once again, before you pass into the presence of your God, the words which loose, and it is loosed in heaven. You beg of our Divine Lord, with all your heart, that your dying moments may be soothed by the last anointing, that the holy ointment may be laid upon the eyelids soon to be closed in death, while the healing and chastening graces of God flow in upon your soul. You implore that, in that hour when, for you, time and eternity meet; when earth is moving away from under your feet, and the veil is about to open and disclose the mysteries beyond the grave; that the Bread of the way may be given to you, and that you may pass into the presence of Jesus the Judge, with soul fragrant from the touch of the Body and Blood of Jesus in His own Blessed Sacrament of Love.

And daily, also, you beseech the Mother of God that her gracious power may be round you in the closing scene, that her loving hand may support you, that a reflection

of her beautiful faith and reliance on God may shine in upon your soul, banishing all thought of unworthy terror or gloom or despair. "Pray for us, now and at the hour of our death."

My dear brethren, I have only a few more words to say, simple and feeble, God knows; but I hope they will sink into your heart. "Bind it upon thy fingers, write it upon the tables of thy heart." We hope the pure Mother of Jesus and of men will watch over us and help us in the hour of our death. We wish to thank her always for all her love and help, to thank her as adequately as our poor service can. We must thank her, therefore, for the favour and grace we crave from her hands in our dying hour by anticipation. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth, before the time of affliction come, and the years draw nigh of which thou shalt say, They please me not;" that is to say, remember, love, and serve God faithfully while life, and vigour, and health are yours, give Him the best of your life, and mind, and heart while able, so that, when strength of body and mind fail, when the heaviness of death obscures the mind and palsies the lips that would pray, God may remember your past faithfulness, and supply what is wanting in you.

This is God's warning to men. And shall we not also thus remember the Mother of our Creator "ere the sun, and the light, and the moon be darkened," ere the light of our bodily vision be dim, and the mists of death are closing round the trembling soul? Shall we not thank our Mother Mary now, love her more deeply now, strive with all our zeal now to spread her glory, not only in the hope of her assistance, but as a thanksgiving offered before by a loving heart for the shelter we hope to find under her mother's mantle, and the peace and sweetness from her mother's prayer when we come to die?

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Catholic Sermons

BY REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXVIII.

Prayers for the Dead.

"Amen I say to you, if two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in heaven" (St. Matt. xviii. 19).

During this month of November, my dear brethren, there are not merely two or three "consenting together," but the whole Church on earth unites in prayer to obtain grace and pardon for our departed brethren; and we agree together in asking of our Common Father that which it is most pleasing to Him to grant—mercy for His own most beloved children. We cannot, then, doubt the great efficacy of the universal prayer for the dead, which is the special devotion of this month.

To join in prayer for the dead is a distinct duty; no one can put away from himself the general obligation of charity; he is bound to be charitable, and to help others in their necessities, by the very fact that God has placed him here on earth with other men, and so he is bound to be charitable to his departed brethren by the very fact that he is united to them by the Communion of Saints. If anyone seriously neglects this duty, he is not only unkind, but is, in a sense, unjust, because he deprives the souls of the faithful of the succour they have a right to look for, and by which, perhaps, God meant them to be helped.

We will, therefore, to-day, think a little more in detail of the different ways in which we may help the holy souls. And first let us go back to the consideration on which all our efforts must rest; we can only help the souls of the faithful as instruments of the Precious Blood of Christ. Everything we do must have its efficacy, not from our own deserving, but from the merits of our Lord; here on earth we are all, in a sense, "dispensers

of the mysteries of God," since He has given Himself to us, and, with Himself, "has given us all things."

The most direct way in which we can apply the merits of Christ's Precious Blood for our brethren is by the Sacrifice of the Mass. Every priest at his ordination receives "power to offer sacrifice to God, and to celebrate Masses both for the living and the dead, in the name of the Lord;" and in every Mass a commemoration of the faithful departed is made at the most solemn moment. The Mass, however, may be applied in a much more definite way. Every Mass is said, first, for a general intention—that is, for all the universal ends of Sacrifice, Adoration, Thanksgiving, Praise, and Petition—and then, for some special and particular object which depends on the intention of the priest who celebrates the Mass.

In the Old Law, Sacrifices were ordained for all kinds of objects, both public and private; those who were in trouble and affliction, either for themselves or their friends, could come to the altar of God, and have their Sacrifice offered for themselves and their special wants. So it is in the New Law also. We have, indeed, but one Sacrifice, but this one includes in itself all the ancient sacrifices, and is offered for all the objects for which they were offered. All these ancient sacrifices plainly had their efficacy from the Passion of our Lord, which was then to come; and men in general, and each individual for himself, might draw unceasingly on this one great fountain of salvation. All this, and much more, our Lord has given to Christians in the Sacrifice which He has provided for them. The very Sacrifice of Calvary is mystically renewed for their daily Sacrifice, and may be offered again and again, not only for the general wants of the Church, but for the private necessities and wishes of her children.

The Sacrifice which our Lord offered on the cross was one of infinite efficacy. He was Himself the Infinite God, and everything that He did and suffered for us had an infinite value. In the same way, the Sacrifice of the Mass is inexhaustible in its merits and efficacy. From this source, all the saints and all the servants of God

have drawn, and, after all the immense favours and graces bestowed, the fountain is for ever overflowing. "You shall draw water in joy from the fountains of your Saviour," and "of His fulness we all have received, and grace for grace."

There is no favour so great that we may not confidently ask it of God for the sake of this great Sacrifice which He has put into our hands, either for ourselves or for others. He has given to us, if we may say so, a credit on which we may draw without limit.

The Sacrifice of the Cross was, as I have said, of infinite value, and yet the saving grace which men receive is determined by their capacity of receiving, and the diligence with which they apply it to their souls: and, in the same way, it is the will of God that the Eucharistic Sacrifice, although it is infinitely efficacious, should be to us a daily Sacrifice, which we should offer again and again as our most powerful means of supplication; and He will give us, of its infinite treasures, according to our perseverance and capacities, and according to His own good pleasure.

You may, then, have Mass said for your own special intention, either for your own wants or for others, either for the living or the dead, but you must do so in the way appointed by the Church—that is, by making the proper offering towards the support of the priest who offers the Sacrifice for you, for "they that serve the altar partake with the altar. So also the Lord hath ordained that they who preach the Gospel should live by the Gospel" (1 Cor. ix. 14).

Such things are not to be a matter of bargaining or of buying and selling, but the Church lays down what it is right and expedient for her ministers to receive and her children to give, just as in the Old Law, when Almighty God appointed what it was that the people should offer in sacrifice. They had to offer of their substance, and if they grudged their offering I think they received no blessing; and, in the same way, if you desire that God should receive the Sacrifice offered in your name, you must not grudge giving what the Church has settled as a fit and proper offering for you to make.

The most solemn way in which Mass is celebrated for the dead is when it is said with black vestments and the proper prayers for the souls of the faithful. There is one Mass for All Souls' day, another for the day of death, or of the funeral, and another Mass for the anniversary of anyone departed; it is also a pious custom to celebrate Mass for the dead on the third, seventh, and thirtieth day after the interment. Besides these special Masses, Masses may be said in black on any day when no feast interferes either for the souls of the faithful in general or for any person deceased. A Mass for the dead is, in substance, just the same as any other Mass, but wherever there is room, if we may say so, the Church raises her voice to apply the Holy Sacrifice for the refreshment, light and peace of her children. "Eternal rest give to them, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon them;" and the prayer at the offertory is: "O Lord Jesus Christ, King of glory, deliver the souls of all the faithful departed from the pains of hell, and from the deep pit: deliver them from the lion's mouth, that hell may not swallow them up, and that they may not fall into darkness; but may the holy standard-bearer, Michael, introduce them to the holy light, which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed. We offer to Thee, O Lord, sacrifice and prayers: do Thou receive them in behalf of those souls whom we commemorate this day; grant them, O Lord, to pass from death to that life which Thou didst promise of old to Abraham and his seed."

Again, at the *Agnus Dei*, although the Church so seldom changes the prayers of the solemn part of the Mass, she says: "Lamb of God, who takest away the sins of the world, grant them rest, grant them eternal rest." The psalm *Judica me, Deus* and the *Gloria in excelsis* and the Creed are omitted, and in place of them the *Dies Iræ* is recited. This is the Church's most beautiful and plaintive hymn to the Judge of the living and the dead, begging for mercy in the hour of death and judgment:

"Recordare Jesu pie,
Quod sum causa tuæ viæ,
Ne me perdas illa die."

"Jesus, my God! to Thee I pray,
O save me in that dreadful day,
By all Thou didst for me."

By these special prayers, a wail of mourning is introduced even into the Eucharistic Sacrifice—a cry of sadness, indeed, but also of loving confidence; and the Precious Body and Blood of our Lord are offered up to God for the faithful departed, accompanied by the most earnest and touching petitions from His Church on earth.

But Masses for the dead are not always said in black, with the proper prayers for the occasion; these can only be celebrated when the rubrics allow it—that is, when no feast interferes. The ordinary Mass appointed for feasts, however, may always be offered up with a special intention for the benefit of anyone deceased, and, as far as the Sacrifice is concerned, it is of the same effect.

If you cannot have Mass said for your departed friends, you can, at least, join in offering for them the Mass at which you assist. You are not merely present at Mass as a spectator; you join with the priest in his offering. At the *Orate fratres* the priest turns to the people with the words, "Brethren, pray that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty," and you can have your own special intention in hearing Mass. When you receive the Blessed Sacrament at Mass, you join in the Sacrifice in the most complete way. Our Lord then gives Himself to you, and, as it were, places at your disposal the merits of His most Precious Blood for your own salvation, and that you may offer it up for your brethren. How must the Holy Souls envy you the great privilege you enjoy! What would they give to be able to avail themselves of the infinite merits of our Lord Jesus Christ as you can? Can you doubt that our Lord will hear you at that time if you plead earnestly for the suffering souls, and that He will allow you to apply the treasure you have received towards the payment of their debts? To receive Communion devoutly for the souls of the faithful, and especially for those most dear to you,

is, then, one of the great ways in which you should try to help them at this season.

There are a great many indulgences which may be applied for the Souls in Purgatory, and this is also one of the ways to avail ourselves of the merits of our Lord for their benefit. An indulgence is not the forgiveness of sin, but a remission of the punishment which remains due to sins already forgiven. The Church was established by Christ to carry out the work of redemption, and, as our Lord gave to men all the merits of His Passion to atone for their sins, so He left power with the Church to apply them in such a manner that the little prayers and acts of virtue which men perform may be available in payment of the great debt which they owe to God.

To many acts of devotion indulgences are attached, by which we may receive the remission of the punishment we have deserved, and this remission we may offer up for the souls of the faithful. They are not helped in the same way that we are. They are no longer the subjects of the Church on earth, and the power of binding and loosing which our Lord granted no longer applies to them. Indulgences can only help them by way of "suffrage"—that is, we can offer what we have ourselves gained, and beg of God, in His mercy, to apply it to them according as He may see fit. On the other hand, we very often fail to obtain for ourselves remission of punishment because the sins themselves are not forgiven. It may be that we are still attached to our sins, or at least have not renounced them thoroughly and in earnest; so that we are continually interposing an obstacle which prevents us from receiving the forgiveness God's mercy offers to us. With the Holy Souls, however, it is not so. They no longer have the least attachment to sin; their wills are now thoroughly purified, and unalterably fixed to do the will of God, so that they can never oppose the smallest obstacle to the designs of His mercy. We may, therefore, offer for them, with great confidence, the participation of the merits of our Lord, which is granted to us by the Church in His name.

The solemn commemoration of the souls of the faith-

ful immediately follows the Feast of All Saints. The object of this seems plainly to be that all parts of the Church may be brought together, and, as it were, make common cause. This suggests to us that when we pray for the dead we should unite ourselves with the blessed in heaven, and get them to join with us in prayer. One of the distinguishing attributes of the saints, whilst on earth, was a tender devotion to the souls of the faithful; it is hard to find one whose life does not tell us that he was diligent in praying for the dead. The lively faith and burning charity of the saints, and the keen sense that they had of sin and the punishment of sin, were always urging them on to pray for those who were suffering for sin. Will their zeal be less now than it was whilst they were on earth? Now they see God face to face, and can understand, a thousand times more clearly than we do, the immense misery of being separated from Him. They can understand that burning thirst "after the strong living God," which is the essential torment of purgatory.

How earnest, then, must be the prayers which they send up before the throne of God! "How long, Holy and True, how long?" The Church triumphant joins with us, then, in this holy work of intercession; apostles and martyrs appeal to the throne of Christ, and ask grace for the sake of their labours and their blood; holy men and women entreat our Lord on behalf of their children and descendants, for those who were members of their flocks upon earth, or who have been devout to them; and, most of all, the Virgin Mother intercedes for all those who have been given to her as children by her Divine Son. She is the Mother of all Christian souls, and as such must feel for all in their necessities. How great, then, must be her care for the Holy Souls—the souls so dear to her Son, and yet suffering so terribly under the weight of His anger! May we not confidently ask her to aid us in the work of freeing them from their pain?

"They are the children of thy tears;
Then hasten, Mother, to their aid;
In pity, think each hour appears
An age whilst glory is delayed."—*Father Faber.*

But the Church triumphant, great and glorious as it is, cannot do all that we can. It is the will of God that all members of the Body of Christ should help, each in his own way. He has, therefore, put into our hands the Sacraments and Sacrifice which the blessed in heaven can no longer use; He has given us the power of satisfying for sin, which they no longer have. They enjoy the fruits of the Precious Blood in surpassing glory, as the source of all their blessedness; but we have it in our hands as an unfailing and unbounded storehouse of merit.

When you pray for the dead, then, think that you have a great work to do in union with the saints in heaven, and ask them to join their intentions with yours, so that you may be, in the highest sense, in their communion, as working with them to carry out the designs of God's mercy; beg of them to intercede for your particular objects of devotion, and help in heaven what you are doing on earth. We pray, indeed, for all the faithful, but we may well have special devotions of our own; not one in that holy, suffering Church is excluded from our prayers, yet there must be many whose case specially appeals to our feelings.

We may pray, for instance, with particular earnestness for those who are at the very gate of heaven, whose time of sorrow is nearly over. What a joy it would be to be able to pay that last farthing for which they are waiting, and open for them that blessed portal! Again, we may pray for those who are particularly friendless—who have none to pray for them; many there may be who are thus utterly abandoned and forgotten; perhaps they deserved it, because on earth they thought little of their brethren; but still God will hear our prayers for them, since it is His delight to show mercy. Others, again, had, perhaps, no time for preparation, or are suffering for the very faults to which we are most addicted, and for which we may one day have to suffer. Most of all, we are called upon to pray for our own people—parents, relations, friends, and benefactors, to whom God's Providence has given a special claim on our sympathy.

Listen to the words of St. Augustine about the death

of his mother, St. Monica: "Lay, she says, this body anywhere; let not the care of it disturb you; this only I request of you, that you would remember me at the altar of the Lord, wherever you be. And when she had delivered this sentiment in what words she could, she was silent. . . . And behold the corpse was carried away; we went and returned without tears. For neither in those prayers which we poured forth unto Thee, when the Sacrifice of our price was offered for her, the corpse being placed by the grave's side, before being deposited therein, as the custom there is, not even in those prayers did I weep." "Inspire, my Lord, my God, inspire Thy servants, my brethren, Thy sons, my masters, whom with voice, and heart, and pen I serve, that as many as shall read these words may remember at Thy altar Monica, Thy servant, with Patricius, her sometime husband. May they, with pious affection, remember my parents in this transitory light, and my brethren, under Thee, our Father, in our Catholic Mother, and my fellow-citizens in the eternal Jerusalem, that so, what she made her last request to me, may be granted to her more abundantly through my confessions than through my prayers, in the prayers of many" *(Faith of Catholics*, vol. iii. pp. 187, 188). Such should be the feelings of all good Catholics for their departed parents, brothers, and sisters, intimate friends, and all who have a special claim on us. If we accustomed ourselves to think over all those who have a particular right to ask our help, and dwell on the circumstances which specially appeal to our feelings, there is no fear but that our prayers for the dead would be constant and earnest.

And now comes another consideration. What can the souls of the faithful do for us? A great deal, my dear brethren; we cannot help them without, at the same time, doing much for ourselves. How powerful is their example! We cannot enter in spirit into that prison of purgatory without learning lessons which it is hard to learn otherwise. The rich man in the Gospel said: "Then, father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brethren,

that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torments" (St. Luke xvi. 27). What must be the earnest desire of the holy souls to warn us of the punishment of sin, lest we, too, should come into that place of torments!

Our departed brethren know, perhaps, how recklessly, how foolishly we are going on, day by day, laying up sorrow for ourselves; they see us, as it were, pouring in drop after drop of that bitter chalice, which one day we may have to drink, even to the very dregs. They full well know its insupportable bitterness, and they know, too, how easily we might avoid it by the mercy of God, and by the means which He has placed at our disposal. How gladly would they come to teach us these lessons, were such the will of God! But our Lord says: "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them," and we have the very clear teaching of the Catholic Church, if we will only attend to it, and we have the example of our brethren, if we will only think of the lessons it sets before us.

Fancy, my dear brethren, if one of these Holy Souls could come from his prison, and preach to you about Purgatory; fancy such a one in my place!—one who has seen our Lord face to face in judgment—one who has seen how beautiful, and yet how terrible, He is—one who has had to pass every detail of his life, his every word, his secret thought, before the all-seeing eye of His Maker, and has heard the judgment of God on each one of them! How would such a one speak to you of the justice of God, and of the care of your salvation? What would he say of venial sin? What if he could but hear you speak of *small* sins—of offences which were matters of no consequence? He would tell you, my dear brethren, that these little things were the very bars of his prison, which kept him from his rest; that over these little things, so heedlessly done, he was now grieving night and day in his exile, and might, perhaps, have to go on grieving for years.

What, in particular, would he have to say about the neglects and irreverences which men commit in the ser-

vice of God? With astonishment and indignation must the angels behold the way in which He is treated by mankind, but these, our brethren, behold us with pity; they know only too well how great is the debt we are heaping up, which one day we shall be called on to pay. Each act of irreverence, every wilful neglect of the duty we owe to our Creator, we shall have in some way to atone for. Now we content ourselves with giving Him the least we can; we think we have done a great thing if we have got through matters of strict obligation with the least trouble possible; we pretend to give a Sunday's work to God, and call it the Lord's Day, and then give Him half-an-hour of our time, and, perhaps, *very* little of our thoughts. What would the Holy Souls tell us of our cleverness in all these matters?

Again, our departed friends might have something to tell us about excuses. The world is full of excuses; we have excuses for everything. We excuse ourselves from the service of God; we cannot hear Mass. Our health will not allow us to fast and abstain; we have no time for many prayers, and it is clear that our circumstances will allow us to give away very little to the poor, and very little to the Church. It is plain that our first duty is to our families, and that, in all things, we must observe the rules of prudence, moderation, and common sense. Excellent excuses! we believe in them thoroughly ourselves, and the world is full of them.

Yes, my dear brethren, but I am afraid Purgatory is full of them too! The "fire which tries each man's work" will not forget to try all our good excuses, and I fear that many of them will turn out to be the "wood, hay, and stubble" of which the apostle speaks. It is no use to make clever and ingenious excuses, which will convince our confessors, and, perhaps, almost convince ourselves, if thereby we are only contracting a debt which, in due season, we must pay to the last farthing. We cannot doubt that amongst the Holy Souls there is many a rich man who now sees how much more he ought to have done with his wealth, and weeps bitter tears over the way he spent it; he has now found out how much

of his prudence was only avarice and self-indulgence. Many a poor man, too, is lamenting, because he made his poverty and hard work an excuse from serving God as he ought. He now sees that he could serve himself well enough, and that his good excuses only came in when it was a question of giving a little trouble to the performance of his religious duties. How sad it will be for rich and poor to see how easily they could have made the circumstances of their worldly position the means of escaping Purgatory, and the perverse ingenuity with which they have used them to heap up sorrow for themselves, and keep them out of their eternal rest! These, and many others, my dear brethren, are the lessons we shall certainly learn from the Holy Souls if we think lovingly of them, and pray for them earnestly.

And now, my dear brethren, for a conclusion, let us place ourselves in spirit at the foot of God's altar, and fancy the whole Catholic Church assembled around. The Church on earth, in every land, joining in the great Sacrifice: the angels and saints waiting to adore the Lamb in His humility on our altar, and, with their golden harps, to supply for the poverty of our songs of praise: and the souls of the faithful looking up longingly for refreshment in their prison, and speedy deliverance, which can come only from the Precious Blood of the Divine Victim. Our Lord is in the midst of us; He is the Father of all, and the bond of union by which all parts of the Church are united together, and by whose merits alone we are able to assist each other.

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Catholic Sermons

BY THE REV. J. B. BAGSHAWE.

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SERMON LXXXIX.

Keeping Sunday Holy.

"And Jesus said to them, Come apart into a desert place, and rest awhile" (St. Mark vi. 31).

Men are bound, by the natural and divine law, to consecrate some part of their time to the service of God. All our lives, indeed, are given us that we may serve God, and, by doing so, obtain eternal happiness; and, in one sense, we are bound to give all our time to Him. This is the lesson our Lord teaches us in His first recorded words: "Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?"

These words convey to us that everything we do should make a part of the service which we owe to our Creator. Great things and small; our work, our rest, and our recreation should all be consecrated to God, so as to be "our Father's business." "All whatsoever you do, in word or work, all things do ye in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, giving thanks to God, and the Father by Him" (Colos. iii. 17). The commonest actions of life, the daily duties you have to do in your families, the routine of your business, the amusements by which life's toil is lightened, are all so many works done for God's service, if only they are consecrated to Him by a good intention.

Men cannot, however, persevere in this kind of service unless they also set apart a sufficient proportion of their time for direct communication with Him. They owe Him a debt of worship and praise, and, at the same time, are in constant need of graces, which can only be obtained by prayer. "Come ye to Him, and be enlightened, and your faces shall not be confounded" (Ps. xxxiii. 6). If we do not come into the presence of God as we ought to

do, the world soon becomes very dark to us, and the store of good will and intention soon becomes exhausted, and the daily works of life soon cease to be in any sense the service of God.

The time which we consecrate directly to God is the salt with which all our lives are seasoned; but, "if the salt lose its savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" (St. Matt. v. 13). Those, therefore, who are remiss in prayer, and neglect to give a fair share of their time to God's service, soon lose the savour of goodness which ought to make even their most trifling actions acceptable to God.

It is, then, the law of God, and the law of our nature, that we should consecrate a portion of our time to Him, and this is laid down to us in the Third Commandment, which says: "Remember thou keep holy the Sabbath Day." In the New Law, however, the times and seasons which we are to dedicate to Him have been left to the ordering of His Church. This is clear, as I before showed, from the fact that all the days which God commanded the Jews to keep holy have been abrogated in the Christian Church, and new days have been substituted in their place. Not only have the festivals which belonged in a particular manner to the Jewish dispensation been changed, but even the ancient Sabbath day, which was from the beginning, has been put aside. The Church in apostolic times appointed a new day, and allowed the Sabbath Day, by degrees, to fall into disuse; so that the Lord's day, the Christian Sunday, is in no sense the same festival which the Jews observed. It is appointed, indeed, with the same general object—that is, to give to God's service a proper proportion of our time; but the memories, the spirit, and the rules of its observance are essentially different.

As the Church appoints the days we are to offer to God, so it tells us how we are to consecrate them to Him; and, to observe them properly, we must attend to the laws, and to the spirit of the Catholic Church. There is scarcely any duty of a Christian life which is of greater importance than the due observance of Sunday. Those who are engaged in the ordinary pursuits of men cannot generally

give much of their time to prayer during the week, and, therefore, if they do not sanctify Sunday, they very soon fall away. The spirit of prayer is dried up within them, and they become cold and indifferent in the service of God. Those, on the other hand, who are devout in the observance of Sunday, are perpetually renewing their fervour.

"Be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, who, according to God, is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Eph. iv. 23). How can we be "renewed in the spirit of our minds" if we do not frequently come near to our Lord, by giving a reasonable time to His service? A household, then, in which the Sunday is well observed, where the parents take pains to teach their children, by word and example, to keep Sunday holy, and make it a day of piety and devotion, is sure to have the blessing of God; the parents have, at any rate, given to their children, for their after life, a most efficacious remedy against the dangers and temptations of the world. On the other hand, when fathers and mothers neglect to instil into their children's minds this reverence and devotion for the Lord's Day, the time of temptation comes, and the children are deprived of the arms with which to fight against it.

With regard to the observance of Sunday, Catholics in this country are placed in a difficult position. We are surrounded by good and well-meaning people, who would turn the Christian Sunday into a Jewish Sabbath. They would, as far as possible, apply to the observance of Sunday all the severe laws which were laid down for the Jews in the Old Law. They follow, indeed, the Christian Church, by observing the first day of the week instead of the seventh, which God commanded the Jews to observe so strictly, but they would transfer to it the usages and spirit with which the Jewish Sabbath was observed. Such people would keep Sunday with an austerity which resembles that of the Pharisees; they would forbid any kind of recreation and enjoyment, so as to make it a day of gloom and restraint, instead of a refreshment to soul and body.

Our Lord tells us that "the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath;" and any degree of severity which prevents the Sunday from being a day of real rest is inconsistent with the object for which it was instituted, and, moreover, gives rise to a very dangerous reaction.

It is impossible, however, not to have some sympathy with those whose mistake consists in wanting to give a great deal to the service of God, and who are very self-denying and consistent in carrying out what appears to them to be His law.

On the other hand, there is around us a great deal of laxity in the observance of Sunday, and this is a much more dangerous error. Great numbers of people are to be found who look on the Sunday simply as a day of amusement and idleness, and would give little or nothing to Almighty God. This is very dangerous, because our own natural inclinations dispose us to fall in very easily with such a view of our duties.

Between these opposite errors, Catholics have to guide their course, and they can only do so by attending to the commands and to the Spirit of the Church. We must endeavour, in the first place, not to give scandal. It is well, as far as possible, to avoid anything which may unnecessarily shock religious people, and make them fancy that we are careless in observing Sunday. Their prejudices sometimes seem to us unfounded and unreasonable, but still charity suggests that we should rather deny ourselves than do anything to alienate them from the Church. St. Paul says: "Take heed, lest, perhaps, this your liberty become a stumbling-block to the weak . . . through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish for whom Christ died?" (1 Cor. viii. 9). Catholics sometimes forget this principle of charity, and think it a fine thing to give this kind of scandal—and particularly in the way in which they observe Sunday.

We cannot, however, in the least agree to the principle on which this strictness is founded, and it is quite contrary to the spirit of the Catholic Church. Let us see what our Lord Himself tells us in the Gospel. He begins by rebuking the over-strictness of the Pharisees: this He

does over and over again, and to do it He even allowed Himself to be called a Sabbath breaker. He worked a number of miracles expressly to raise the question: "And the ruler of the synagogue, being angry that Jesus had healed on the Sabbath Day, answering, said to the multitude: Six days are there wherein you ought to work. In them come and be healed, and not on the Sabbath Day. And the Lord, answering him, said: Ye hypocrites, doth not every one of you, on the Sabbath Day, loose his ox or his ass from the manger and lead them to water? And ought not this daughter of Abraham, whom Satan hath bound, lo! these eighteen years, to be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath Day?" (St. Luke xiii. 14).

Again, in another instance, the Jews said to him that was healed: It is the Sabbath, it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed. He answered them: He that made me whole, He said to me: Take up thy bed and walk" (St. John v. 10). Our Lord here did not scruple to tell the man to take up his bed and walk, although He knew that by doing so He would offend against the notions of the Pharisees. Again, when they "went through the corn on the Sabbath, His disciples, being hungry, began to pluck the ears and to eat. And the Pharisees, seeing them, said to Him: Behold, Thy disciples do that which it is not lawful to do on the Sabbath days" (St. Matt. xii. 1). But our Lord defended their conduct, and it is remarkable that in every instance in which He spoke of the observance of the Sabbath Day, it was to condemn the exaggerated notions of the Jews.

Our Lord lays down two principles on which a reasonable observance of Sunday must be based: "And He said to them: The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath; therefore, the Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath also" (St. Mark ii. 27). "Made for man"—for all his reasonable wants of body and soul; and, therefore, any strictness which does not take these necessities into consideration is contrary to our Lord's spirit: "Made for man," not for a few staid and devout people, but of the bulk of men—of hard-working labourers, and restless children; for people who require bodily rest and relaxa-

tion, and very often need exercise and amusement quite as much. Our Lord's spirit would allow a reasonable scope for all these things.

But He says also: "The Son of man is the Lord of the Sabbath." It is His day, even when He allows us to use a part of it for our own purposes. From the beginning the Sunday has been called, "dies Dominica," or the Lord's Day; this is the Church's name for it, and the name still lingers in most modern languages. It is His day; and we are to observe it, not according to any fancies of our own, but as we are directed to do by the Church, which speaks in His name, and which alone has authority in such matters.

The first Commandment of the Church is, "to keep the Sundays and Holydays of Obligation holy, by hearing Mass, and resting from servile works." We will begin with the obligation of resting from work on Sundays. This is the essential condition of the day: if you do not rest, and give up the ordinary toil of your life, the day becomes like all other days, and it is vain that you pretend to make it the Lord's day. It is true that we may do servile work when it is *necessary;* but this plea of necessity is very often much abused. There are few things about which people make false consciences for themselves more easily, and we constantly see work done—and this even by good people—which is not really necessary.

It is not *necessary* to work on Sundays, merely because you can gain a little extra profit, or avoid a little trouble, or because you have not moral courage to refuse to do anything that you are asked. Sometimes, no doubt, a man's living depends on his being able to do certain work on Sundays, or he may be under very hard masters and in distress, so that he cannot help himself; but, generally speaking, people can have a good deal of their own way, and can stand up very well for their rights and for what they want. If, then, they do not take the least trouble to keep Sunday free for the service of God, we cannot but suppose that in many cases it is not necessity, but indolence or indifference.

Again, it is not necessary for people to give large

dinner-parties, and receive visits, so as to make their servants work all Sunday. A great many rich people are very heedless in such things, and do not seem to trouble their consciences at all about the matter; everything that suits their convenience is a *necessity*. The Catechism says: "Parents, masters, and mistresses are strictly bound to provide that those under their charge shall hear Mass on Sundays and Holydays of Obligation;" and, in the same way, they are bound to give those under their control the opportunity of resting from all work not *really* necessary.

When Catholics are lax and negligent in this matter, they do incalculable harm, and are often a standing scandal: they are a scandal, by leading others to neglect the observance of the Lord's Day, and, perhaps, to go much farther than they themselves do; and they are a scandal, by giving occasion to the enemies of the Catholic Church to speak against her. In the great battle which is going on in these days between religion and irreligion, at least let us not be found on the enemy's side, strengthening his hands by our example.

The duty of Sunday, however, is not done simply by resting from work; we have, unfortunately, around us, the example of too many who rest from work, but are as far as possible from making it the Lord's Day. They make it the devil's day—a day of idleness and dissipation; on which, perhaps, they commit more sins than on any other. It is, moreover, quite possible to observe the letter of the Church's commands, and yet quite to violate the spirit of them. Let us see, then, what is the intention and meaning of this rest.

The Sunday ought to be, above all things, a day of recollection; the very object of its institution is to give us the opportunity to recollect ourselves, or, to use the expression of the Holy Scripture, to "enter into ourselves." Our Lord calls upon us all, in the words of my text, to "come apart, into a desert place, and rest awhile;" that is, He tells all the busy, hard-working men of this world to leave their ordinary toil, however useful and important it may be, and take the rest needful for

soul and body. He would have them leave their shops and counting-houses, and the care of their domestic concerns, to come and sit down for a little while in His company, that they may confer with Him about something more important than business, or family, or life itself.

He knows how difficult it is for any one, in the full tide of ordinary affairs, to think of his soul, and that, if he would know anything of his own state, it is absolutely necessary to retire a little from the crowd and "enter into himself." This is the beginning of every conversion. The prodigal son went on in his wanderings, till he met with afflictions that compelled him to look at his own state, and, as soon as that was done, his return was comparatively easy; so it is, that the weekly recollection of Sunday does so much, both for the perseverance of the good and the conversion of sinners.

You cannot, then, observe Sunday, according to the spirit of the Church, without giving some time to recollection of spirit—without going apart, for a while, with our Lord to listen to what He has to say to you; and every arrangement of Sunday which does not include this is a faulty one. You ought not habitually to allow yourself either occupations or amusements which are inconsistent with the necessary degree of recollection; nay, even frequent visits to the church should not be allowed to interfere with this interior spirit. You find people sometimes who are very fond of attending many public devotions, and visiting many churches, and yet contrive to be very seldom alone with God.

Our Lord says: "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and, having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret, and thy Father, who seeth in secret, will repay thee" (St. Matt. vi. 6). These words refer principally to that mental recollection which is the very essence of prayer. We may shut the doors of our hearts, and be alone with God, and pray to Him in secret, in the midst of a crowd, as truly as we could in the desert; but still the words seem to point to the advantage of some kind of home devotion, where people literally shut their

doors and pray in secret, or, at any rate, do something in the way of retirement and recollection.

This, then, ought to be the spirit of the Christian Sunday. It is our Lord's Day—a day for seeking Him in church and in His Sacraments—a day for listening to His words both externally and in our own hearts—a day especially when we seek His company by interior recollection, and desire to go apart with Him, and "rest awhile" from the ordinary concerns of life. This is the idea of Sunday which you should impress on your households; not merely that there are certain duties of absolute obligation which, before all things, they must be careful to attend to, but that they are to observe the spirit of the day honestly and generously, so as to make it truly the Lord's Day.

In saying this, I do not mean to find fault with innocent amusements; recreations, followed in a right spirit, may be made the service of God, and "the Sabbath is made for man." Our Lord sympathizes with all our feelings. He "knows what is in man," and He does not grudge us a reasonable portion of the time He has taken for Himself—nay, if young people occasionally take an *un*reasonable part of it, and, now and then, spend a large part of the day in taking fresh air and exercise, which they cannot otherwise get, I do not think He will be offended—if they are careful in hearing Mass—provided that, as a rule and habitually, they keep Sunday in a right spirit, and give their time and service generously to Him.

And now let us consider how we are to practice this recollection of mind, of which I have been speaking. Meditation, or mental prayer, is the most efficacious of all the ways by which we can enter into ourselves. It was the favourite devotion of the saints, by which they were kept constantly full and overflowing, with the fervour that appeared in every word and action. It was, in particular, the special devotion of St. Ignatius, and his principal instrument in the conversion of sinners, and the sanctification of souls. No habits of sin, no coldness of heart, can long resist good meditations. "My heart

grew hot within me, and in my meditation a fire shall flame out" (Ps. xxxviii. 4). This flame, of which the Psalmist speaks, is powerful enough to consume all the obstacles that come between us and our sanctification.

To meditate, you require three things—to dwell upon the presence of God; to be for a sufficient time alone with Him in heart; and to speak to Him in your own words; all the rest comes of itself. Our danger and trial is that we are so near to God, and yet so far off from Him. "In Him we live, and move, and have our being," and yet He may often say of us as of the Jews: "This people honoureth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." It will always be so, unless we take some special pains to think of God's presence, and to present ourselves in spirit before Him. Our Lord is near to us, and yet we do not see Him, and cannot hear His voice, because the glare and the tumult of this world come between us and Him; and it is the work of meditation to put these aside for a moment, that we may be face to face with our Creator, and obtain from Him the graces we most need.

One of the best practices for reminding us of the presence of God is spiritual reading, and this is a subject to which I would call your special attention at the conclusion of this sermon. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of pious reading, and the lives of the saints are full of its effects. You have often heard, I dare say, of the wonderful conversion of St. Ignatius: that he became a saint by reading the lives of the saints. When confined to bed by his wounds, he took to these histories: "He read them, at first, only to pass the time, but afterwards began to relish them, and to pass whole days in reading them;" and so began his saintly life.

Spiritual reading is important, because it is the easiest way of coming into God's presence by recollection. Many people find it hard to make a regular meditation—their thoughts wander, and they grow weary: but no one can really say that is difficult to spend a short time in reading a book, and following the thoughts it suggests. You have no method to learn, and require no practice: you are

not obliged to leave your home, or your own room; and yet you have a powerful means of raising your heart to God, or, we may say, God speaks to you through the pages of your book.

Some such exercise is necessary for a Christian life. If you have not something to keep up the store of good thoughts and feelings within you, you cannot expect to persevere in prayer. You hear people complaining of dryness and indevotion: they cannot pray, their minds suggest no good thoughts, they have nothing to say, and they cannot keep their attention. Is this wonderful if they do nothing to replenish the store of good within them? At the present day a certain amount of religious reading is particularly necessary. People read a great deal at the present day, but the greater part of the literature hich surrounds us leads to dissipation of mind, and it is sometimes very dangerous. Besides this, we are surrounded by active and jealous Protestants, who spare no pains in putting forward their own particular views: they are, of course, quite ignorant of the Catholic faith, and proportionately bitter against it. All this, day after day, cannot fail to have an effect, as the dropping of water on a stone, unless we do something systematically to counteract it; and there is nothing better fitted for the purpose than regular religious reading.

Such reading, then, ought to have a distinct place in the Sunday duty of every Catholic household; it should be impressed on all young people that some devout reading must form a part of every well spent Sunday. Many seem to think, at the present day, that when they have heard Mass they have nothing more to do, but that they may read novels and amuse themselves all day long.

This is clearly defective training; it is not, perhaps, that they want to do wrong, but they have been brought up with a lax idea of their duty, and they do not rightly understand what is meant by giving a good day's service to Almighty God.

Years ago, at the beginning of the present century, the Catholics in England seem to have had a much greater zeal for religious reading, and we owe to them many of

the most valuable books now in use; but the practice of pious reading seems rather to have gone out of fashion, and it ought to be the earnest wish of all good Catholics to revive it.

The reading ought to be of two kinds—instructive and devotional. We hardly realize how much most people need instruction; but many, perhaps, learned their faith in childhood, and have studied it very little since, so it is not wonderful that their knowledge should sometimes be imperfect. It is one of the objects of Sunday to keep up an accurate knowledge of the faith, and there is no way in which it can be done more effectually than by spiritual reading. It is not too much to say that anyone who gave half an hour every Sunday to some course of instruction, as well as devotion, could not fail to know his duty.

The books to be read are, the Holy Scriptures, the lives of the saints, sermons, instructions and meditations. We want to read a great deal about the life of our Lord in the New Testament, as well as such books as the "Imitation of Christ" and others, that put His doctrine and example before us. It must, however, be confessed that, at present, we have not in England a very good supply of religious books, or, at any rate, of books suitable to the poor, and accessible to them, and this may be one of the reasons why there is so little spiritual reading. The Sermons which I am now writing are an attempt to supply this deficiency. Sermons and instructions in Christian duties form one very important kind of spiritual reading, but many other kinds of reading are necessary, and it should be one of the great objects of Catholic zeal to supply them.

I think I cannot do better than conclude this volume of Sermons by exhorting all my readers to help, to the best of their power, in the work of supplying and circulating Catholic religious reading, for the spiritual benefit of their brethren, and especially to help them in sanctifying the Lord's Day.

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